

THE THIRD
Catholick Letter
IN
ANSVVER
To the Arguing Part of
Doctor Stillingfleet's
SECOND
LETTER
To Mr. G.

By J. S. John Sargeant.

Published with Allowance.

LONDON,
Printed, and sold by Matthew Turner at the Lamb in
High-Holbourn. 1687.

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ANSWER

To the Answering Part of

Doctor Helling's

SECOND

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By J. S. John. 1784.

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THE THIRD
Catholick Letter, &c.

S^t R. Come now to take a view of your Second Letter, with my Eye, as in the former, fixt only upon what I think you mean for Argument. Whether you give us just your *First Words* at the Conference, or *second Thoughts* since; whether most troublesome Part of Mr. G's Discourse be left out; in short, whatever belongs to matter of Fact, shall be out of my prospect, which shall be bounded by what you think fit to open to it.

You acquaint us here (*Pag. 17.*) that you put two Questions: 1. *How does it appear that the Church of Rome is Infallible in the sense and meaning of Tradition?* 2. *Is this Tradition a Rule of Faith distinct from Scripture?* And you complain of Mr. G. that his Copy makes you ask a very wise Question. viz. *How does it appear that the Church of Rome is Infallible in Tradition?* Why this Question should be ironically call'd a very wise one, I cannot imagine. I am sure it is very pertinent to the Intention of your Dispute, and directly points at one of the Chief Subjects of the Conference. But you shall have your Will; tho' I beleive it will appear Mr. G's question made better Provision for your Credit in point of Wis-

dom than you have done for your self.

2. For, your Second was in truth a very needless Question; because both your self and all your Auditors, if they ever heard any thing of this kind of Controversy, knew beforehand without needing to ask, that the Tradition we lay claim to, pretends to derive down the Intire Body of Christ's *Doctrin*, and not only the *Books* of Scripture, of which (P. 9.) you very learnedly seem to counterfeit your self ignorant. And this is the first part of your distinguishing the plain Sense of this Word [Tradition] as held by Mr. G. By this Question you tell us (p. 9.) you intended to put a difference between the Tradition held by us [Protestants] and the Tradition disputed. For the first meaning of the Word [Tradition] which you grant, you put the Universal Testimony of the Christian Church, as to the Books of Scripture. The second and deny'd meaning you contradistinguish from the former in these words: But if by Tradition, be understood either some necessary Articles of Faith not contain'd in Scripture, or a Power in the Church to make unnecessary to become necessary, this I deny'd, &c. Certainly, Sir, you have a Logick of your own, so peculiarly fitted to your designs, that no man living but your self ever us'd in (I ever thought) and apprehended I had all the World on my side for thinking so, that all Differences or Distinctions were to be Opposites, and to divide the Common Genus, or the Notion that was to be distinguish'd; and, therefore, since the first sense of the Word [Tradition] was Tradition for Books of Scripture, which is your Tenet; I verily expected the opposit sense of it should have been Tradition for Doctrines, which is Ours; and that, as the former was Tradition for Christ's Words, so the latter should be Tradition for Christ's Sense. But while I was vainly imagining

i magining the second sense of the Word would be *Tradition for Faith*, instead of *that*. I found nothing but such *Articles*, and such a *Power*. Did ever any mortal Man think or pretend that *Tradition* was an *Article*, or a *Power*, any more than that it was a Horse shoe? Did your self when you granted the Latin and Greek Churches follow'd *Tradition*, intend to signify that they follow'd *Articles* and *Powers*? The summ then of your learned Distinction is in plain Terms this: *Tradition is two-fold: One is a Tradition for Books; the other is no Tradition at all, but only Articles and Power*. Had it not been better then to have accepted of Mr. G's Civility, and have answer'd to the purpose, rather than out of a pique to his Copy, and a desire to make it stand in need to be corrected, thus to pervert common sense, and out of a too zealous care not to forfeit your *Wisdom*, to commit such an illogical Absurdity? But Sense and Logic, tho' they be plain and honest true Friends, yet I must own that, like the *Queens* Old Courtiers, they may appear scandalous Companions to a man of your more polite and modish Education. However, I dare answer for you, it was not ignorance of their worth; but an unlucky necessity, which made you introduce in their room two *New Questions* to while away the time and escape the true one, which you had no mind to meet close and grapple with. Yet perhaps you may have better luck in your First Question; let us see: By your First Question then, and your Explication of your *Design* of it immediately after, 'tis easy to discern that you again quite mistake the End and Use, and consequently the Nature of *Tradition*; which is a very inauspicious beginning, and puts us out of hopes you should ever discourse pertinently of it, since you go about to impugn you know not what. For *Tradition* does not bring

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P. 7.

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us down set Forms of *Words* only, as you imagin, viz. (as you instance *P. 7.*) *Christ was the Son of God*, under which you say well a *Heretical Sense* may ly: But it derives down to us the very *sense* of those words, and all the rest of *Christ's Doctrine*; there being found in Tradition all the ways and means to signify and express the Determinate Meaning and Sense of Forefathers that can possibly be imagin'd. For, they not only deliver the Propositions of Faith in such or so many *Words*, as you apprehend; but, they signify to their Children the very *Tenets* they have in their hearts, in such expressions as best suits with the occasion, according as their different methods of explaining themselves may lead them. You may upon reflexion observe it passes thus in your self when you instruct people in their Faith: In which circumstance, you do not ty your self up to rigorous Forms of Words made to your hands, but take your liberty to deliver your self in any manner that you judge will make your meaning be best understood. The same Method is taken by the Pastours of the Church (and the Fathers of Families too according to their pitch and station.) They Catechize their Children; they Preach upon the Texts proper to such Points; they dilate themselves in their Discourse, with a full design to make their *Sense* be perfectly comprehended; they reply to the difficulties of those who are not yet perfectly instructed, or well satisfied; and accommodate themselves to all their Exigencies. Lastly, they lead their Christian Lives, and breed up others to do the same, by those Principles: And, Experience as well as Reason tells us, that nothing gives the determinate sense of *Words* which express *Tenets*, more distinctly than does perpetual Practice, and Living conformably to what's signified by those Words. The want of which

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Requisites in the Letter of Scripture, which can give no Answer to any difficulty, nor vary any expression to make its Meaning more Intelligible, nor live, and by Example make the Reader live according to such a sense, shews clearly, that, taking it alone and unassisted by the Church's Tradition (determining and ascertaining it's meaning in Dogmatical Points) it cannot in any proper Speech be call'd a *Rule of Faith*.

2. If, notwithstanding what has been said, this Discourse should still seem to you more a Speculation than a Real Truth (which yet I judge impossible): pray reflect how your self would go about to instruct your own Children in your Faith; and you will easily find by experience, when 'tis brought home to your own case, how connatural this Way is to *clear* to them *your sense*, in what you would have them *Believe*. Do not your self use the same Method? Do you only deliver to them certain *Forms of Speech*, without endeavouring, by all the possible means you can invent, to imprint the true *sense* (that I may use your own Instance) of these Words [*Christ is the Son of GOD*] in their Souls; and to make it still clearer to them, as their budding capacities grow riper and riper? Do you not experience they come by degrees to understand you too; and that you have at length transfus'd into them the *Sense* of the Tenet you had in your own Breast? Do not you practically instil into them, that they ought to *Pray* to Christ; and exercise their Faith, Hope and Charity towards Him while they are Praying? Do not you tell them they are to give *Divine Reverence* to Christ; without stinting them, or making them scruple, lest they give too much, or commit Idolatry, by giving that to a Creature, which is only due to the *True GOD*? And does not this Practice, beyond all possibility of mistake, insinuate into them, that

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he is *equally* to be *Ador'd* with God the Father, or *Equal* to him; and, so, not a *Creature*, but *very God of very God*? I doubt not but you do all this; at least, I am sure, if you do it not, you do not your Duty: Nor do I doubt but your Children come at length to *understand* you too, and, by understanding you, become of the *same* Religion. And can you imagine, that Men were not Men in all Ages, but (in the blind times of Popery forsooth!) degenerated into Parrots, and learn'd to prate *set-Words*, without minding their *Sense*? Or, that Christians were not alwayes Christians, and endeavour'd to imbue under-growing Posterity with the *Meaning* of the Tenets they profess; and hop't to be Sav'd by their propagating them to those whom they were bound to see Instructed in Faith? Or, lastly, can you conceive there can be any Means invented by Man's Wit, to make known and propagate the *Sense* of Words that express Points of Faith, which is not in the highest measure found in *Tradition*? If you cannot, (as I am sure you cannot) then you must withal either confess, that *Tradition* brings down the *Sense* of Christ's Law, and not the bare *Words* or *Sounds* only; or, you must advance this monstrous Paradox, that there is no possible way in the whole World for Mankind to communicate their Thoughts and Meanings to one another in such Points; the contrary to which you experience dayly in your self and others. And, were this so, then, to what end were Catechisms, Sermons and Controversies about such subjects? To what end all Instructions, Conferences, and Explications of them by the Pastours? Again, if you grant these (as you must) to be the best Expedients to transmit down the *Sense* of Christ's Words, that is, our *Faith*; how can you hold *Scripture's* Letter the *Rule of Faith*; which, taken as counterdistinguish't to *Tradition*, wants all those most effectual Means
of

of discovering to us it's *Meaning*. Certainly, That must be the *Rule of Faith* that is best qualify'd to give us our *Faith*; and that must be best qualify'd to give us our *Faith*, which has the best Means to give us *Christ's Sense*; and not that which wants all the best Means to produce such an Effect. On the other side, supposing *Christ's Doctrine* once settled in the Body of the Church, how can you deny *Tradition*, thus abundantly furnish'd with the best Means imaginable to deliver down the first-taught *Doctrine*, to be such a *Rule*; seeing no more is requir'd to be a *Rule of Faith*, but to be qualify'd with a Power to acquaint us who live at this distance with the true *Sense* of what was deliver'd by the Founders of the Church in the beginning, without danger of losing it by the way; which cannot be imagin'd as long as Tradition is held to, the same believ'd to day which was held yesterday, or that the immediately succeeding Fathers still deliver'd the same *Doctrine*. To do which there wanted no *Power*, as has been lately shewn to the full; nor *Will* to use that Power; being oblig'd to it by the greatest Penalties G O D himself could inflict, the Damning Themselves and their Posterity.

4. But, say you (pag. 8.) *If the Church may explain the Sense and Meaning of Tradition, so as to oblige men to believe that by Virtue of such Explication, which they were not oblig'd to before, then 'tis impossible the Infallibility of Tradition should ly in a constant Tradition from Father to Son; for they have no Power to oblige to any more than they received.*] How Plausibly and smoothly this Discourse runs, and how shrewdly it seems to conclude? Would any well-meaning Reader imagin that it were perfect Non-sense all the while, and wholly built on your own Liberality, giving us another sort of *Tradition* which is no *Tradition*? This malignant word [*Tradition*]

dition] must not be taken in its *right sense*, that's resolv'd, for then it would grow too troublesome; but, take it in any *other sense*, that is, *mistake it*, and then *have at it*. For when you speak of *explaining the sense and meaning of Tradition*, you do not take *Tradition*, as, you know well, we do, and as the word plainly imports; for the *Delivery of Doctrin*, but for *Doctrins Deliver'd*; and so again, we have once more lost the Question. For, what can these words mean? If the Church may explain the sense and meaning of Tradition; that is, of the Method of conveying down Christ's Doctrin? The Method of *Delivery* is the very *Signification* of that Doctrin from Age to Age, and how can one *Explain* the Sense and meaning of a *signification* of Christ's sense, when it's self is that very *Explication* of it? This gives me occasion to reflect how oddly you have hamper'd our Tradition hitherto instead of handling it.

P. 9. You seem to doubt by your [*If no more were meant, &c.*] Whether it does not mean *Tradition for the Books of Scripture*; and, this you knew well enough before, was none of our Tradition in dispute here; which, as may be seen by Mr. G's Demonstration put down by your self, *First Letter p. 4. and 5.* is confess'd to be Tradition for *matters of Faith or Doctrin*. Now in this new sense you give us there of *Tradition*, you kindly **grant* it; for 'tis your *own*, not that which we here mean by that word. Next comes **another* [*If*] and makes it seem to signify **Articles and Power*. And this is *no Tradition at all*; neither *ours*, nor *yours*, nor any body's: For, neither those *Articles* nor that *Power* you speak of p. 10. are or can be the *Delivery* of Christ's Doctrin from day to day; for that speaks such a *Method* of *bringing down* things, not the things *brought down*. And this you very gravely *deny*. And so you may, with my good leave, either deny or expunge, or condemn it to what doom

* P. 9.

* Ibid.

* P. 10.

doom you please; for certainly it comes with a *felonious Intention*, to draw the Reader out of his Road into a Labyrinth of Non-sense, and then robb him of his Reason. Again, *p. 7.* you make it a Delivery of bare Words, at best, with a *general* (impossible) sense, and perhaps a *Heretical* one too, into the bargain; whereas you cannot but know *Tradition*, as *We* mean it, is a *Delivery* of the *sense* of Christian Tenets, and this a *particular* sense too; and such a one as *cannot possibly be Heretical*, while this Rule is *adher'd to*; unless the First-Taught Faith were Heretical, which is Blasphemy to imagin. And, here again *p. 8.* you make *Tradition* or *Delivery* to mean the *Point delivered*, and would have us give you the *signification* and *Explication* of That which is it's self the *signification* and *Explication* of Christ's Faith; and this too, the **very best* that can be imagin'd. Is it possible to deform Tradition more untowardly, or wrest it into more misconstructions than has been done already? After a serious manner, certainly, 'tis impossible: But *Drallery* is now to act its part: And to cheer your spirits, which droop't under the difficulty of answering the Argument for Tradition, you put your self in masquerade; and would make the Relation of perhaps two or three, it may be, partial Friends of yours, concerning Mr. G's Discourse about You, a perfect parallel to our Rule of Faith; and that, if they can mistake or misrepresent, down goes Tradition. Which amounts to this, that sooner may all the Christian Fathers in any Age, consisting of many millions, and those dispers'd in far-distant Parts of the World, be *mistaken* in their Faith, which is import'd them no less than their *Salvation to know*; sooner may all of them conspire to *deliver* to their Children *another Doctrin* than that which they held the way to Heaven; than that a very

*See Sect. 2. &
3.

few of your own Party should, to gratify you, tell you a false Story, or Aggravate; tho' all of them were, besides, profess Adversaries to the Person against whom they witness; and, indeed, Witnesses in their *Own Common Cause*. I beseech you, Sir, tho' you be never so much to seek for a solid Answer, yet speak at least plausible things, and do not thus expose your Credit while you affect to play the Wit. Poor Tradition, what has it done to be thus misrepresented! Did it deserve no better for bringing down the Book of Scripture, but to be expos'd in so many awkward Vizards, when it was to come upon the Stage, and not once suffer'd to shew it's true face, but still *travestee'd* into another Form, and put in all shapes but its own? This Carriage of yours is enough to make the Reader think you apprehend it to be some terrible *Gorgons* Head, or some *Basilisk*; and, that the very sight of it, unless it came thus muffled up, would undo you. At least he will suspect from such an untoward broken Scene, that the Drama is not like to be regular: Indeed you shift too often, and to catch and confute you I must travel thro' the whole *Compass*; for no sooner can a man steer one way, but your Discourse, like the Wind, whips straight into another quarter; and about we must tack, or we must not make forwards at all. But I will insist no more at present on this dexterity of yours; you will afford your Friends many fresh Instances of it, through the whole course of this Letter hereafter. Onely, I must note your forgetfulness, or what else may I call it? For you took the Notion of *Tradition* very right, First Letter (p. 7.) where you alledg'd you had a *larger and firmer Tradition for Scripture* than we had for us: You did not *there*, take *Tradition* of that Book, for the *Book delivered*; for then that *Book* had been the *Delivery* of its self; and yet that

that *Book* had as good Title to be it's own Tradition, as you had to make the *Points delivered* by our Tradition to be the *Tradition* or *Delivery* of those Points. You granted too in the same place that the Latin and Greek Churches proceeded upon it; and, by granting this, confest there were as many Attesters went to make it up as there were Men, (at least Intelligent men) in the compass of the many vast Nations which those two Churches included: How come you then so much to forget your self as to parallel it *here* to the pitiful Attestation of three or four possibly prejudic't Relaters. But the reason of this self-contradicting and extravagant representation of *Tradition* is clear; it was your Interest to take it *right there*, and the same reason prevail'd with you to take it *wrong here*.

5. But I am weary of fencing with Shadows, when I can take any occasion that leads me to treat of what's Substantial. Mistake me not, 'tis not your Discourse that obliges me to it; it had been a sufficient Answer to That, to let the Reader see you purposely mistook the Nature of Tradition, to divert and perplex his Thoughts, and there let it rest. Yet, Because your taking Tradition *wrong*, for the Doctrines *deliver'd*, good use may be drawn from it, I shall, for the benefit of the Reader, not decline speaking to what you object. You make account (p. 7. & 8.) the Tradition of the Church deliver'd the Point of the *Real Presence*, & of Christ's being the Son of God, in *General Words* onely. Which, waving what has been alledg'd in my 2d. and 3d. *Sett*. I judg for divers other Reasons to be Impossible. For, besides that, if the Forefathers deliver'd onely the *Words*, they taught their Children (against the supposition) no *Faith* in these Points, for Faith has *sense* in it, and is not Faith if it have

have none, being in that case no true Judgment or Truth; who knows not that Words were instituted and intended by Mankind to signify something; and, therefore, 'tis inconsistent with the nature of the same Mankind, when at Age, especially the Wiser sort, not to hold some Sense or other to be signify'd by those Words; and with the nature of Christians, not to instruct those whom they are to educate in Faith, with that Sense; as also with the nature of those who are to be Instructed, not to desire to know the Sense of the Tenets they are to believe. But, that Sense cannot be a General one, that is, Common to all the several Tenets now found among us (for it will not be General if it exclude any one) it must therefore abstract from all particulars, and be applicable to every one. Now there is no such General Notion or Sense which can be abstracted from Christ's Body, which is Living, and a piece of Bread, unless this, that they are both Quantitative or Mixt Bodies; to believe which would make a very extravagant Point of Faith; much less can such an Abstraction be made from Christ's Reall Living Body, and some supernatural Gifts or Qualities, either in the Bread, or wrought in our Souls by Means of our receiving the Eucharist; For a Substance and a Quality differ into genere (as the Logicians express it) that is, belong to different Commonest Heads, which have no Genus above them, or that can abstract from them. Least of all can any such Common Notion be abstracted from the Natural or True Son of God, and a meer Man; no more than there can from God and a Creature. Whence follows most evidently, that, since the Faithful must necessarily have always had some Meaning of those words in their hearts, and a general Sense of them is impossible, they must have ever had Particular Notions

Notions of those Words, determining their Sense to the *one* signification, or the *other*; that is, either to mean Christ's *Real Body*, or *not his Real Body*; a *True* and *Essential* Godhead, or a *meer Creature*. My second Reason is, because Faith is Ordain'd to *work through Charity*, or to stir up devout Affections in us; whence, as the distance is Infinite in both cases, between *one* of those *Senses* and the *other*, there being *God* on one side, on the other a *Creature*; so the Affections of the Soul wrought in us by our Faith, must either oblige us to pay an *Infinite* Veneration to a *Creature* if Christ's *Real Body* (and consequently *God*) be *not there*, or if Christ be *not God*; which is the greatest deviation from true Religion that is possible; or else, to be highly Irreverent, and to want the most efficacious Motive that can be imagin'd to excite and elevate our Devotion, if he *be there*, or Christ be *indeed God*. Nor can any *middle* disposition be invented that can make the Acts of the Soul *hover* between it's tendency towards an *Infinite* and *Finite* Being, or between an *Infinite* and *Finite* Reverence. I dare confidently conclude then, and dare avow it to be Demonstrable out of the Nature of Mankind, that either the *one* or the *other* *Determinate Sense* of those Words must have been held in all Ages, ever since the Apostles time, by the *Generality* of the foregoing Faithful; more or less expressly, as those respective Points, broke out more or less into Christian Action; which their Duty could not but prompt and oblige them to deliver to their Children as occasion served; and consequently, that that *Particular sense*, and not onely (as you fancy) the *General Words*, must have descended by *Tradition*.

6. Next, my Position is, that, taking the word [*Tradition*] for *Points descending by Tradition*, as you will

will needs have it, the Church has Power and Authority to *explain the Sense and Meaning* of them, and to *oblige* others to believe Her; and yet, that this hinders not the *Infallibility of Tradition from consisting in holding the same to day that was deliver'd yesterday, &c.* This is the difficulty, I conceive, that so much troubles you. To clear which, you may please to *reflect* on what you know *already* by experience; that, let any man advance a single Tenet, and afterwards, upon occasion, set himself to *Explicate at large the Sense* of that Proposition; 'tis plain, there will be found in that large Explication many *particular* Propositions; not *adequately* the same, but *in part* different from that which he went about thus elaborately and *distinctly* to explain; of which perhaps even himself was not aware while he did not *reflect*; not being yet invited to make it clearer, or dilate on it. And yet he held, even at first, the *Sense* (and not only the *Words*) say the *whole* Sense of that main Tenet or Sentence; tho' he saw not *distinctly* every *single* Proposition contain'd in it, till he became oblig'd to Scan and Study his own undistinguish'd, but true, thoughts concerning it. The same may be said of every Sermon and it's Text, supposing it be rigorously held to; and no more be attended to but to explain it's *intrinsick* and *full* Meaning. In which case, the Preacher sticks not to assure his Auditory, that what he has Preach't to them all the while, is *Gods Word*; and to press them to regard it as such, as far as his small Authority over them can reach. And, had he more, in case he did verily judge his Explication of that Text was genuin, and, consequently, Christ's true Sense; he would questionless esteem himself bound to make use of that Authority to his utmost, to edify them with the Explicit Belief of each *Particular* contain'd

tain'd in so Excellent a Truth. This being so, why should not the same Privilege be granted to the Church and her Pastours to explicate, upon due occasion, the Sense of Christ's Faith, in many parricular Propositions involv'd in the main Tenet, (even tho' we should suppose them to be not heard of, perhaps not distinctly thought of, *before*) which is allow'd to every private man, and any ordinary Preacher. And, if those Governours of the Church be, by their Office, *Conservers of Christs Law*, and see that these Propositions, newly singled out, are *included*, in any Point of Faith receiv'd upon their Rule; why ought they not, out of their Duty and Zeal to preserve Christ's Faith *Intire*, both *define* these Points, and also use their Authority to oblige the Faithful to accept them as such; or, if they disaccept them and express themselves against them, to exclude them from their Communion?

7. But still, say you, these particular Points came not down by Tradition, nor were deliver'd as held yesterday, and so upwards till Christ's Time; for they were not held *at all* before they were defin'd or declar'd. I distinguish: These Propositions were *beld ever* and descended *ever* as they were involv'd in the *Intire* Point; in the bowels of which, the Sense of those others were found: But, as *singled out* in such and such particularizing manners of Expression, they were (perhaps) *not beld ever*. I say, *not held ever* formerly, at least not *universally*. Which is the true reason why some Private Writers, nay possibly some Great Men, might (out of a dutiful fear not to add to Faith) have doubted of them, or disaccepted them, perhaps oppos'd them; till the Collective Church, or some Great Body of them, who are able to look more intelligently into those Points, declar'd and *unfolded* the Sense of the main Article, in

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which they were hitherto ~~enrapt~~. For, besides that it is *their* peculiar Office, and (as it were) Trade, to look deeper into the *Sense* of the several Points of Faith, than *others* do; 'tis very Rational to conceive, that those Tenets were found more particularly explicated in *some* parts of the Body of the Church than in *others*; which makes it difficult to affirm any particular Point defin'd since Christ's time, was not in *many* places of the Church held *ever*, tho' it was not in *All*; nor made as yet any great Noise, being as yet neither oppos'd, (which alarm'd the Church to reflect heedfully upon it;) nor so powerfully recommended, which oblig'd the Faithful more briskly and manifestly to own it. What difficulty or disagreeableness to the connatural course of things there is in all this, I cannot imagine; Nor, I am confident, your self; unless your thoughts, starting at the unwelcome Conclusion, should recoil back to your former mistake, that only *Words* came down by Tradition; or that Christ's *Sense* was never in the Breast of the Diffusive Church (his Spouse, and the *Pillar and Ground of Truth*) and in the Understandings of her Pastours; which takes all Faith out of the world, and destroys the very Essence of a Church: Or, lastly, that many particular (or rather *partial*) Propositions are not *included* in the *Total Sense* of every main Tenet, and *disclos'd* by a full explication of it; whence it comes to be discover'd to be a *Part* of *It*, that is, *in part It*.

8. I am sorry you will needs give me occasion to interrupt such Discourses, as tend to the clearing some Truth, to defend *Tradition* against your reproachful mistakes; with which, in defiance to all Sense, I had almost said against your own Conscience too, you have loaded it. But these are some of your Extrinsiccal Arguments,

guments, which, for want of better, jealousy of your cause and reputation prevails with you still to make use of; and, so, you will triumph mightily if they be past over unconfuted. You attempt, p. 8. to play your Politick Game; and to conquer us by dividing us in our Rule of Faith; tho' it cost your Credit very dear to effect it. To this end, running on in your former mistake of the plain word [*Tradition*] and that it means *Points* and *Articles*, you tell us sadly that this denying to the Church of Rome Power to explain *Tradition* takes off from its Power & Authority. That it resolves all into meer *Humane Faith* — meer *Natural Reason* — That the utmost it can amount to, is resolving Faith into a *Logical Demonstration*. Then follows the Holy Cant. And is this the Faith Christians are to be sav'd by? what Grace of God; what Assistance of the Holy Spirit are necessary to such a Faith as this? But for this I refer you to the *Hæresis Blacloana*. You should have added * [where Dr. Tillotson, and my self have the honour to be brought in for writing so Catholicly]. Truly Sir, you have given us a very pretty Period; in which many of your modish qualifications vy for the precedency, and 'tis hard to determin which has most Title to it. Nay, p. 13. you tell Mr. G. that our Grounds overtrow the Church's Authority in matters of Faith, and proceed upon *Pelagian Principles*. Your Charge, Sir, is very grievous and heavy; and therefore, unless the Evidence you bring to prove it, be answerable, you will manifest your self to proceed upon a new Christian (in truth, an old Unchristian) Principle; but, which suits it seems with your humour, and is requisite to your Cause, *Calumniare fortiter* — I need not tell you whose it was.

19. To stop your mouth therefore once for all concerning *Hæresis Blacloana*, know that that Book, tho'

p. 9.

See *Hæresis Blacloana*.

Printed in a Catholick Country, could not be licent'd; but came out surreptitiously, without any Printers name at it, or any other then a fictitious name of the Author. Know that it was sent to *Rome*, and was compar'd there with the Doctrin of Tradition which it impugn'd. And yet it was not found that this Doctrine either *overthrew the Churches Authority in matters of Faith*, nor that there was any *Pelagianism* in it: Otherwise those Books which were accus'd of it, and defended Tradition to the height, had not escap'd their Censure. This shews how shallow this Exception of yours is; and to what mean shifts you are reduc'd, since you can quote a squabbling Book of one Roman-Catholick against another about Tradition, in stead of answering the Argument for it. An ill-natur'd man might, (you know very well) name Authors of another Communion; not too well thought and spoken of by Eminent Persons of their own side, and written against too by others. Yet I shall not be so like some I know, to turn a Dispute into a Wrangle; but shall apply my self to shew how far the Doctrine of Tradition is from deserving to be charg'd with such injurious reflexions.

10. But before I go farther, I must take notice of your quoting *F. Warner* here, *p. 8.* and your appealing to him, where you put *Herefis Blacloana* in the Margent: By which you seem to hint, that he is the Author of that Book, and an Adversary to the Doctrine of Tradition; even so far as to judg it not found in Faith: for, no less averſion could make you very much question whether *F. W.* would absolve any man who profess'd to embrace Catholick Faith on Mr. G's. Grounds. But, as that very Reverend Person declares, he never saw that Book till some of them were presented him bound, so himself has forestal'd your little policies, aiming

ing to set us at variance in our Tenets, in his *Anti-Hamman* p. 203. [*We Catholicks have Faith, because we believe firmly those Truths that God has reveal'd, because he reveal'd them to the Church: Which, as a faithful Witness, gives hitherto, and will give to the end of the World Testimony to that Revelation. And we cannot be Hereticks because we never take the liberty to chuse our selves, or admit what others chuse; but we take bona fide what is deliver'd us, reveal'd by the greatest Authority imaginable, on Earth, which is that of the Catholick Church.*] He proceeds: [*Here then is the Tenure of our Faith. The Father sent his only begotten Son, consubstantial to himself, into the world; and what he heard of his Father he made known to us, Jo. 15. 11. The Father and Son sent the H. Ghost; and hee did not speak of himself, but what he heard, that he spoke, Jo. 16. 13. The Holy Ghost sent the Apostles, and they declared unto us what they had seen and heard, 1 Jo. 1. 3. The Apostles sent the Highest and Lowest Prelates in the Church; and the Rule by which they fram'd their Decrees was, Let nothing be alter'd in the Depositum, Let no Innovation be admitted in what's deliver'd: Quod Traditum est non innovetur.*] But he more expressly yet declares himself no Adversary to this way *ibid.* p. 267. Your Friend Mr. G. B. had call'd this way of proving Doctrines, that *They had them from their Fathers, they from theirs, a New method of proving Popish Doctrines;* and receives for Answer these words. *You discover your Ignorance, in saying that Method was New, or that Arnaud invented it: Mr. Thomas White had it before Arnaud: Mr. Filher a Jesuite, before T. W. Bellarmin before him; & St. Auſtin, St. Stephen Pope, & Tertullian before them all.* Where you see he both allows this very Method we take, as practis'd by Modern Controvertists,

trovertists of note ; nay, by some of his own Order too, whom he is far from disapproving ; and by Ancient Fathers also, whom he highly venerates.

Your petty Project thus defeated, I shall endeavour to open your Eyes, if they be not (which God grant they be not). *wisfully shut.*

11. The Asserters of *Tradition* observing, that the Adversaries they had to deal with admitted *Christ's Doctrine* to be *Divine*, held it the most compendious way to put a speedier End to all Controversies, (which Experience taught them were otherwise liable to be spun out into a voluminous length) and the most efficacious Method to conclude all the Heterodox, of what denomination soever, to prove, That the Doctrine held *now* by the Catholick Church was *Christ's*, or the self-same that was taught *at first* by Himself and his Apostles. It was bootless for them to attempt to prove this by Texts of Scripture, manag'd by their Private Wits ; For, the *Truth* of our Faith depending on *Christ's Teaching* it, if it were not Absolutely Certain *Christ taught it*, it could not be evinc'd with Absolute Certainty to be *True*. Now, the same Experience inform'd them, that no Interpretation of Scripture, made by Private Judgments, (of themselves, or others) could arrive to such a pitch of Certainty ; and, consequently, would leave Faith under the scandalous ignominy of being *possibly*, and, perhaps *actually* false. It was to as little purpose to alledge against such Adversaries the *Divine Assistance* to the Church, or *Christ's Promise of Infallibility* to it, as you very weakly object to Mr. G. (p. 16.) as *not once asserted* by him. For, tho' this was *believ'd* by the *Faithful*, yet it was *disown'd* by all those *Heterodox* ; and, being it self a point of *Faith*, it seem'd improper to be produc't for a *Rule of Faith*. Besides, how should they prove this *Divine Assistance* ?

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If by Scripture interpreted by their Private Judgments; these not being Absolutely Certain, it would have weaken'd the Establishment of that *Grand Article*, which to the *Faithful* was a kind of Principle to all the rest, in regard that upon the Certainty of it, the Security they had of all the other Articles was to depend. If, by the *Divine Authority* of the Church it self, it was not so easy to defend that method not to run round in a Circle; whereas all Regular Discourse ought to proceed straight forwards. These Considerations oblig'd them to set themselves to make out by *Natural Mediums*, that the *Human Authority* of such a Great Body, as was that of the Church, was *Absolutely Certain*, or *Infallible*, in conveying down many visible and notorious *Matters of Fact*; and, among the rest, (or rather far above the rest, the Subject being Practical, and of infinite Concern) that such and such a Doctrine was first taught to the Age contiguous to the Apostles, and continued ever since. By this means they resolv'd the Doctrine of the present Church into that of *Christ*, and *his Authority*; and, consequently, (these being suppos'd by both Parties to be *Divine*) into the *Divine Authority*, granted by all to be the *Formal Motive* of *Divine Faith*.

12. This is the true state of that Affair. And now, I beseech you, Learned Sir, Where's the *Polagianism*? Where is the least Ground, or shadow of Ground, for all these bugbear words and false accusations, which, to make them sink deeper into the Reader's Belief, and create a more perfect abhorrence of our Tenet, come mask't here under an affected shew of Godliness? All hold their *Faith* relies on the *Divine* (or *Christ's*) *Authority*, into which they finally resolve it: and all Catholicks hold Grace necessary to believe the *Mysteries* of *Divine Faith*; tho' all, perhaps, do not judge Grace needful to believe

*P. 154.

lieve upon *Human Authority*, this Matter of Fact, viz.² That *Christ taught it*. Yet my self in * *Faith vindicated*, seeing that the admitting this Truth would oblige the Heterodox to relinquish their ill-chosen Tenets, and return to the Church, against which they had a strong aversion; did there declare my particular Sentiment, That God's Grace and some Assistance of the Holy Ghost was requir'd, to make them *willing* to see the force even of this *Natural Demonstration*, so much against their Humour and Interest. Is it Pelagianism to conclude, that *Human Motives*, which are *Preliminaries* to Faith, and on which the assuredness of Faith it self depends, as to us, are *Truly Certain*? And, Might you not with as much reason say the same, if one should maintain the *Absolute Certainty of our Senses*, which is one of those *Preliminaries*? How strangely do you misrepresent every thing you are to meddle with! How constantly do you make your voluntary mistake of every Point serve for a Confutation of it! 'Tis confess'd, & ever was, That the *Human Authority* of the Church, or Tradition, begets only *Human Faith*, as its *immediate Effect*; but, by bringing it up to Christ, it *leads us* to what's *Divine*; yet not by its *own* force, but by Vertue of the *Supposition* agreed upon, That Christ's Doctrin is *such*. Is it Pelagianism to say, we must use our Reason to come to Faith; or, do you pretend all the World must be the worst of Phanaticks, and *use none*? Or, does it trouble you, we offer to justify, that the Reasons we bring to make good that Preliminary, which, in our way of Discourfing, is to introduce Faith, are not such as *may deceive us*? And that we do not *confess* they are *Fallible*, or may deceive us, as you grant of your *Interpretations of Scripture*, which ground *your* Belief? No surely, we shall not quit the Certainty we *have*, because you have *none*. For if it be not
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Certain such Doctrines are indeed *Christ's*, who is our Law-giver, we cannot be sure they are *True*; their Truth depending on his Authority; and, would you have us for fear of Pelagianism confess all our *Faith* may perhaps be but a *story*? But, into what an unadvisedness does your Anger transport you, to run the Weapon through your own Side to do us a Mischief? You bore us in hand (*First Letter* p. 7.) that you had a larger and firmer Tradition for Scripture than we have for what we pretend to. Yet, this *Tradition* could cause no more but *Human Faith*; for I do not think you will say you had *Divine Faith*, before you were got to your *Rule* of Divine Faith. By your Discourse then your self are an Arrant Pelagian too: Perhaps worse than we, because you pretend to a larger and firmer (*Human*) Tradition than you say we have; nay, you pretend it to be *Absolutely Certain* too, which is a dangerous *Point* indeed. Pray, have a care what you do; for, you are upon the very brink of *Pelagianism*. The knowing you have the true Books of Scripture, is a most necessary Preliminary to your Faith; for, without knowing that, you cannot pretend to have any Faith at all; and, if it be Pelagianism in us to hold such Preliminaries absolutely Certain, I fear the danger may come to reach you too. Yet you have one Way, and but one, to escape that damnable Heresy; which is, that you do not go about to demonstrate the Absolute Certainty of Your Tradition, as we do of Ours. That, that is the very Venom of Pelagianism. But, take comfort, Sir, my life for yours, you will never fall so abominably into the mire as to demonstrate or conclude any thing: (For, what Idea soever you may frame of it, we mean no more by *Demonstrating*, but plain honest *Concluding*.) Your way of Discouraging does not look as if it intended to conclude or de-

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monstrate. 'Tis so wholly (pass for as great a Man as you will) made up of mistakes, misrepresentations, petty cavils, witty shifts, untoward explications of your own Words, constant prevarications, and many more such neat dexterities, that whatever fault it may through human frailty, provok't by powerful Necessity, be liable to, I dare pawn my life it will never be guilty of that hainous Crime of *demonstrating* or *concluding* any thing; no, not the *Absolute Certainty* of your *former Tradition*. And, yet, unless you can *prove* or *conclude* 'tis thus Certain, 'tis a Riddle to us, how can you either *hold* or *say* 'tis such.

13. Pray, be not offended, if on this occasion I ask You a plain downright Question. Is it not equally blamable to Falsify your Adversaries *Tenet* perpetually, as 'tis to falsify his *Words*? Nay, is it not worse, being less liable to discovery, and so more certainly and more perniciously Injurious? And can any thing excuse You from being thus faulty, but Ignorance of our *Tenet*? I fear that Plea will utterly fail you too, and leave you expos'd to the Censure of every sincere Reader, when I shew him to his Eye that You *could not but know* all this before. For, in *Error Non-plust* p. 121. Sect. 8. You must needs have read the quite contrary Doctrine, and how those who maintain Tradition do *resolve* their *Faith*. [*There is no necessity then of proving this Infallibility (viz. Of the Church) merely by Scripture interpreted by Virtue of this Infallibility. Nor do the Faithful or the Church commit a Circle in believing that the Church is Infallible, upon Tradition. For, — they believe only the supernatural Infallibility built on the Assistance of the Holy Ghost, that is on the Church's Sanctity; and, this is prov'd by the Human Authority of the Church to have been held ever from the Beginning; and the force of the Human Testimony of the Church is prov'd*

by

Error Non-plust, P. 121.

by *Maxims of meer Reason*] The same is more at large deliver'd in the foregoing *Section*, and in divers other places. Now, this Book was Writ against your self; and, so, 'tis as hardly Conceivable you should never have read it, as 'tis Unconceivable how you should ever answer it. And, if you *did* read it, what was become of your sincerity when you counterfeited your Ignorance of our Tenet? All is resolv'd (say you, here, p. 9.) into meer Human Faith, which is the unavoidable consequence of the Doctrin of Oral Tradition. How shrewdly positive you are in your Sayings, how modest and meek in your Proofs! Nothing can be more manifest from our constantly avow'd Doctrin, and your own opposing it too, than 'tis, that Tradition resolves all into Christ's and the Apostles Teaching: And, pray, do you hold that Christ is a meer man, or that the Believing Him is a meer human Faith, or that the Doctrin taught by Him and Them is meerly Human? If this be indeed your Tenet, I am sorry I knew it not before; for then I should have thought fit to begin with other Principles to confute you: And, I pray God, by your impugning known Truths, you may never need em. I see I had reason to alledge in *Faith Vindicated*, that the Grace of God was requisit to make men assent to a Natural Conclusion when it came very cross to their Interest: For, it appears too plain 'tis exceedingly needful to assist you here in a meer Point of Common Morality; which is, to enable you not to speak and represent things directly contrary to your own knowledge. And, I am sorry I must tell you, and too evidently prove it, that the greatest part of your Writings against Catholicks, when the Point is to be manag'd by Reason, is (in a manner) made up of such study'd Insincerities.

14 You give us another Instance of this Indisposi-

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Ibid.

tion of your Will, p. 13. where you tell us *Mr. M. says, that the first thing which was propos'd, and indeed the only subject Mr. G. had any purpose to discourse on was, whether Protestants had a Ground of Absolute Certainty for their Faith or not?* This you do not deny; but turn it off to a quite different business; and then slide from that to another, till you had wheel'd about the Question from what was intended to the Point you thought best serv'd your turn to shuffle in. *Here (say you) the Faith spoken of is that Faith whereby we are Christians. How? Are Protestants and Christians then Convertible Terms or Synonymas? Are there not many sorts of Christians which are not Protestants? And is it not plain, and not contradicted by your self, that it was demanded, whether (your) Protestants had a Ground of Absolute Certainty for their (that is Protestant) Faith? Does not the word [their] signify theirs as distinct from all other sorts of Christians? And is it come now to signify theirs simply as Christians, or as conjoyn'd with all the rest?* This is too open dodging to pa's upon the Reader. 'Tis granted, you hold many of the same Christian Points which Catholicks do; but 'tis deny'd, you can as you are *Protestants* (I mean still such Protestants as are of your Principles) hold them to be *Absolutely Certain*, or hold them upon such Grounds as are able to support that Firm and Unalterable Assent, call'd *Faith*: The Grounds proper to *your* Protestants being (as was shewn in my Former Letter, *Sect. 24.*) to hold them upon the Letter interpreted by your selves. Of which *Letter*, by virtue of your Principles, you can have no Absolute Certainty (as shall be shewn hereafter;) and of that Letter *Interpreted by your private Judgments*, much less. In a word, either you speak of *Points* held by Protestants, which you pretend to be *all the same Doctrin that was taught by Christ and his Apostles*; and then

then you are distinguisht not onely from those Christians call'd Catholicks, but from Socinians, Lutherans, and (to omit others) Calvinists too, if you be one of those that hold Episcopacy to be of *Divine Right*: Or else you mean the Assent, given to those Points of Protestant Faith, on their pretended *Rule*; and then, you must shew your *Assent* is more *Absolutely Certain* than that of the three last, and divers others who *Dissent* from you in their Tenets, and yet go upon the *Same Rule*; and make it out to us, that, tho' it be both *theirs* and *yours*, yet *still 'tis yours* in particular, or peculiarly *yours*, as you are *such Protestants*.

15. Your next Prevarication is much worse. After you had shov'd *Protestant Faith* into *Christian Faith*, you throw it a Barr and a half further off by virtue of an *Id est. Absolute Certainty of the Christian Faith*: i.e. (say you) *of the Grounds on which we believe the Scripture to contain the Word of God, or all things necessary to be believ'd by us in order to salvation*. This *Id est*, like *Pacolets* wooden Horse, has a Charm to transfer us from one Pole to the other in an instant. By virtue of its all-powerful Magick, *Christian Faith* is made to be the same with *the Grounds on which we believe the Scripture to contain the Word of God*; so that, according to you, *Faith* is the same with your *Grounds for Scripture's* being your *Ground*; that is, *Faith* is made the same with the *Grounds for your Ground of Faith*. What a medley of Sense is this, and how many folds have we here involving one another! *Christian Faith* is *Divine*, these *Grounds* and the *Faith* built on them is *Human*, being the Testimony of *Men*: Are these two the same Notion? Had I a mind to be Quarrellsome, how easily, how justly too, might I retort your former Calumny against Tradition; and object that this way of yours,
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Dr. St. Second
Letter, p. 14.

resolves all into meer Human Faith, meer Natural Reason, that it makes God's Grace and Assistance of the Holy Ghost unnecessary to Faith; and then ask, *Is this the Faith Christians are to be sav'd by?* And reckon up twenty other absurdities springing from this ill-grounded Position. But I am now to trace your transferring Faculty. In your First Letter p. 7. you speak onely of *Absolute Certainty as to the Rule of your Faith, viz. the Scripture*; but here the case is alter'd; and *Certainty of Scripture* is turn'd into *Certainty of the Grounds on which we believe the Scripture to contain the Word of God*. These slippery doings, and not any Reasons you bring, make you Inconfutable; for, we must set upon the Proteus in all his shapes ere we can bind him. The Question is not, whether *Scripture Contains the Word of God*, that is, his *Sense*, or our *Faith*, but (which we cannot mind you of too often, for all will be too little to make you take notice of it) how the *Sense contain'd there can be got out thence*, or be signify'd to us with *Absolute Certainty*, even in the very highest Points of Christian Faith, and what Grounds you have to bring about this Effect: For, you can profess no *Absolute Certainty* of any one point, till you have made it out with *Absolute Certainty*, that the *Sense*, you pretend *contain'd* in Scripture is it's genuin Meaning. This is your true task, if you would prove the *Absolute Certainty of your Protestant Faith*, or your Faith as depending on your Principles. But of this we hear not a syllable.

i6. And I beseech you, to what end is it to tell us you are speaking of your *Rule* or *Ground* of Faith, if it carry you not thorow to any one particular; no, not those Points which are most Fundamental, and to most necessary for the Salvation of Mankind? Since,
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notwithstanding you have your *Rule*; you are still as far to seek as before in all a *Rule* should be good for? Remember, the *Question* and Mr. T's expectation was about the *Absolute Certainty* of *Protestant Faith*, by virtue of your *Rule* or *Ground*; and, therefore, if your *Rule* does not reach to *Absolute Certainty* of the main *Points* of *Faith* at least, you are still at a loss both for your *Faith*, and for a *Ground* of your *Faith*. Yet this, conscious of it's failure, you seem unwilling to stand to, by still sliding silently over it, or slipping by it when it lies just in your way. For, You tell us, pag. 20. that your *Faith* rests on the *Word of God* as its *Absolute Ground of Certainty*. Which by the way is another little shuffle; for you should have said *absolutely-Certain Ground*, not *Absolute Ground of Certainty*. But let that pass, and let the *horse-mill* go for the *mill-horse*. You proceed. *But the particular Certainty as to this or that Doctrine, depends on the Evidence that it is contain'd in Scripture.* You ought to have said, if you would make your *Faith* so *Certain* as you pretended [*We are absolutely Certain such and such particular Points are contain'd there*] otherwise your *General Ground* comes not up to the *Question*, nor does your *Faith* any service at all, since it leaves it still *Uncertain*; of which more hereafter. Especially, since you pretended, or rather declar'd openly, p. 14. that you now held all the same *Doctrine* that was taught by *Christ* and his *Apostles*: Which *Profession* reaches to all the *Points* of *Faith*, and not onely to your *Ground* of *Faith*. I must confess you render'd that *Profession* insignificant, and cancell'd the obligation as soon as you had made it, in the *Explication* of those words immediately following; which makes those hearty expressions [*Absolutely Certain of all the same Doctrine*] amount to no more,

but

* Ibid.

but that you resolve your Faith into Scripture. We must, I see, deal with you as those who have a pre-
tence in Court do with Great Courtiers; who lose
their repute with them as ill-bred, and unmannerly,
if they will needs take them at their word, and do
not distinguish between what's *spoken* and what's *meant*.
Your Answer was very honest and direct [We are *absolutely*
Certain we now hold all the same Doctrine that was
taught by Christ and his Apostles. The Comment is this, [I
fram'd my Answer on purpose to shew that our Faith is
not to be resolv'd into what Christ taught, any otherwise
than as it is convey'd to us by the Writings of the Apostles &
Evangelists.] Whereas, if there be so much as one word
of [Writing or Evangelists] even hinted in your An-
swer it self (unless the Word Taught meant *Writ*, which
cannot be because we never read that Christ *writ* a-
ny Books) or the least Semblance of reason, for ma-
king this Skewing Explication, but to shuffle off your
too large Concession, I will confess my self too shallow
to fathom the profound depth of your inscrutable sense.
Resolve then your Faith, in God's Name, into what
you will, so you but shew us an *Absolutely Certain*
Connexion, between the Points *resolved*, and the Rule
into which you profess to *resolve* it: Otherwise 'tis
no Resolution of Faith, if the continued Chain of Mo-
tives winding it up to the First Truth, or God's infinite ve-
racity, hangs slack. Such Incoherence serves not for
Faith, which must be indissolubly connected to the Formal
Motive of all our Faith; else the Resolution of it may be
shatter'd, and broke to pieces by the way, ere we come
there. Which if it may, then the Resolution is no Re-
solution, for that speaks *Connexion* of the *Motives*; and,
Faith thus resolv'd may perhaps all be *False*, and so
is no Faith. 'Tis your work then to shew in parti-
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cular, when you come to it, and at present in general, that your Rule gives you Absolute Certainty of the Points of Faith, more than it does the Socinian, who have the same Rule, and profess to follow it as much as you do for your heart, and yet erre enormously. Nay, in effect they take the same Method to Interpret Scripture which you do, for, tho' you give good words to the consent of former ages, yet your Grounds do not allow it Absolute Certainty in bringing down Doctrin or interpreting Scripture; and less than such a Certainty, and in such things, signifies nothing in our case. And 'tis either by your Rule and Method, you can arrive thus certainly at the Sense of Scripture, or by nothing. If you could once with Absolute Certainty convince the Socinians of Obstinacy against a Clear Truth by your Rule, or Method, or both together; I mean, if you could make it clear to them that your Rule of Faith, cannot possibly bear any other Sense, so that the indifferent part of the world judg'd them wilful adherers to a false Interpretation, or that you could silence them, and put them to open shame for adhering to it, you would do something. Other wise, your having aside still from the Absolute Certainty of the Points, even tho' p. 14. you pretended to be absolutely Certain you hold them All, and talking to us of nothing but a General Ground, is meer shuffling, and shews plainly you meant not really in that Answer of yours to Mr. G's first Question, where you spoke of all the Doctrins, which includes every Particular Point; so that by All it seems you meant None. 'Tis very paradoxical to see you distinguish here (p. 14) between the Doctrin taught by Christ, and that which was taught by the Apostles. The reason why you do it, is to insinuate into our

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Readers that we derive the Source of our Tradition from Christ's Teaching orally (as the Jews affirm of *Moses* delivering an unwritten Law) else to what purpose this Distinction? The Tradition we lay claim to has no such obscure Original; it takes its rise from the whole Body of Primitive Christians in the Apostles days, dispers'd in Great multitudes over the World, and settled in the Knowledge of his Faith by means of their *Preaching*. So that Tradition starts into motion from a most Publick and notorious matter of Fact, viz. That the Apostles taught the First Christians such a Faith. To what imaginable purpose then was this frivolous distinction brought in? You knew *this* was our Test; and we knew well your Rule was Scripture. What needed then this *Shuffling Paraphrase*? By *Tradition*, you know we mean a *Testimony* for Doctrine receiv'd. If the source be weak, or that the Body of the Witnesses of it's Delivery at first, and successively afterwards, was *small*, the *Tradition* is, consequently, *weak* in proportion; if *Great*, it was *stronger* still, according as the multitude of the Attesters was more numerous, and their Credibility more unexceptionable. Well, but admit your Faith be not resolv'd into what Christ taught by his own mouth, but what the Apostles taught us from him, why must you necessarily resolve your Faith into their *Whisperings* only? Did the Apostles when they went to convert the world go with *Books* in their hands, or *Words* in their *Mouths*? Or were those *Words* a jot less *Sacred* when it came from their *Mouths*, than when they put them in a *Book*? Or, lastly, does any Command from Christ appear to write the *Book* of Scripture, or any Revelation before hand that it was to be a Rule of Faith to the future Church? No such matter: and the Acci-

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denial occasions of it's writing at first, and it's Acceptation afterwards, bar any such Pretences. On the other Side, their Grand Commission was not *Scribere*, but only *Predicare Evangelium*. Yet, you can stubber this over without taking notice of it, and carry it as if the Apostles *Teaching* mean't *Writing* only, and that they *taught* the World no more than they *writ*. Sure you do not mean the Apostles took Texts out of their own *Books*, and preached Sermons upon them as you do now. Why must it be quite forgotten then, and buried in silence, that they *taught* any thing by *word of mouth* or *preacht* the Gospel *publickly*? Allow that to be equally *Sacred* as what is *writ*, and to be embrac't if well attested, and blame the Attestation, and Tradition as it may be found to deserve; but still, when you would put your own *Tenor* as distinguish'd from ours, be so kind as to put *ours* too; and do not stand railing to us, and fooling your Readers, with the Rabbies pretended Tradition from *Moses* his mouth: no more like ours than an Apple is like an Oyster. Again, this Resolution of your Faith gives every one Absolute Certainty of his Faith, who believes he has Absolute Certainty of *Scripture's* letter, and that it contains the *Word of God*. And yet Experience tells us that whole Bodys of Learned men *believe* all this, and yet *differ* (that is, one side *errs*) in the highest Mysteries of Christian Faith. Whence follows; that *both sides*, by this Doctrin, are *Absolutely Certain* of their Faith; one side (for example) is *Absolutely Certain* *there is a Trinity*, and that *Christ is God*; the other, *that there is no Trinity*, and that *Christ is not God*. This seems but a very odd account of the Certainty of Protestant Faith.

17. But you refine upon your self, in your Answer

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to the 3^d Question. p. 14. It was ask'd there. *[By what Certain Rule do you know that the New Testament which we now have, does contain all the Divine Revelations of Christ, and his Apostles?]* This Question evidently aims at two things: viz. First whether some Books writ by the Apostles were not lost; (as appears by those words. *which we now have.*) For if they were, then, being pen'd by men divinely inspir'd, they must necessarily contain some Divine Revelations in them too, as well as did the others; and then how does it appear there were not more or other Revelations, contain'd in them than were contain'd in the books now extant? The other is, that you know well very many hold that diverse Divine Revelations were deliver'd down by Tradition, and not all by Writing. Let's see now how your Answer suites with this Question. *By the Universal Testimony (say you) of the Christian Church from the Apostles times downwards.* This Reply, if pertinent to that Question, must mean that this *Universal Testimony* ascertains us, that the *Scriptures we have now*, contains all the Divine Revelations. But, when you come to explain your self, it comes to no more but that, *The Testimony of the Apostolical, and the succeeding Churches did by degrees make men fix upon the Certain Canon of the New Testament.* What a slight have you taken on a sudden! Where will you pitch when you light? I am sure not on the place where you took wing, and where you ought to have stay'd. For, What is the *Testimony* for the Books we now have, to the Books which have or may have perisht and to their containing some other Divine Revelations? Or, what is the *fixing upon the Certain Canon* of the Books to the difficulty, whether some Divine Revelations did not descend by Tradition *without Writing*? Do the A-

Aposto-

populical or succeeding Churches testify either of these. Or do you so much as demand they do? Not a syllable of this do you say or take notice of; and so, not a syllable have you Answered to his Question. Which was not about the *Quan of Scripture*, or how you would resolve your Faith with which you keep such a pother over and over; but whether the *New Testament we have now contain'd all the Divine Revelations*? If you explicate Scripture no better for your Faith than you do your own words here, you will questionless make a very extraordinary piece of work of it. Your Answers come now and then pretty home, the smartness of the Questions obliging you to it; but your Explications of them immediately after, seem purposely fram'd that we should not take you at your Word in your Answers.

18. That Answer then prevaricating from the whole Question, Mr. G. endeavour'd to press for a pertinent return to what was demanded; and therefore puts his fourth Question thus. *Was that Universal Testimony an Infallible Rule to assure us certainly down to our time, that the New Testament contain'd all the Divine Revelations of Christ and his Apostles*? Your Answer was *The Universal Testimony of the Christian Church concerning the Book of Scripture and the Doctrine contain'd therein, is a sufficient Ground to make us certain of all matters necessary to our Salvation*.

19. Here are many things worth our Admiration. In the first Letter & 7. this Universal Testimony was onely to ascertain the Scripture. In the Answer to the Third Question here, is onely to assure us that the *New Testament contains all the Divine Revelations*; But, here it is to certify us of the *Doctrine too contain'd in it*; which, if you mean as your Words seem to sound,

is all we require in our Tradition-Rule. There may be some other subtle meaning lying yet to be sought in those words, which Time may discover; tho' we cannot see, till he that made the Lock bring the Key. Again, tis ask'd if it be an *Infallible Rule*. Tis answer'd, Tis a *Different Ground*. Tis ask'd, whether *this Testimony assures us certainly the New Testament contains all the Divine Revelations*? Tis answer'd, it makes us certain of all Matters necessary to our Salvation; which is clearly intended for a *diminishing* expression, and argues some fear of undertaking for *all the Divine Revelations* being contain'd there, or *all the Doctrine* that was taught by Christ and his Apostles, as was pretended. ¶ 14. One would verily imagin by this unfavourable Answer, that Dr. S. and Mr. G. were playing at *Cross-purposes*, the Answer is so wide from the Question, at least that there is some intricate design lies lurking; it being so opposite to the way of honest Nature. When one asks a positive Question, all Mankind expects a Positive Answer to the very words as they ly, *Yes*, or *No*. Or, if the words be ambiguous, tis the duty of the Answerer to desire to be satisfied of the meaning of the Asker, if present, ere he answers; without which, in that case, tis impossible to reply pertinently. But, it is not your temper nor interest to use such clear and open candour. For, you saw that great multitudes had the Letter thus secur'd to them, yet had not Absolute Certainty that *all the Divine Revelations* are contain'd in it; therefore by adding [*and the Doctrine contain'd therein*] you had some faint hopes you might be safe. Again, you saw well, that should you grant Universal Testimony to be an *Infallible Rule*, you would hazard to grant too much to Tradition, and all the learned Jests you have broke upon us for asserting *Infallibility* would fly

fix back upon your self: therefore grant it, you *durst* list:
 No, yet *durst* you *deny* it to be an *Infallible Rule*; for
 then (since one of the two it must forcibly be) you
 must affirm it to be a *Fallible Rule*. And then the com-
 mon sense of all Mankind (Mr. T.) amongst the rest
 would be justly scandaliz'd at the new sense: *Rational*
intellectual Ground that may perhaps let *slit* into *Falsity*,
 and overturn what's *Built* on it, deserves not the name
 of a *Ground*; and a *Rule* which may perhaps *mislead*
 me when I *follow* it, is a reality *no Rule*. Besides, should
 you declare 'tis a *Fallible Rule*, Men would wonder with
 what sense you could pretend that a *Fallible Testimony*
 (nay, which you confess to be such) can make you
 absolutely *Certain* of the thing it attests: it being the
 same as to profess I *grant* they may all be *deceiv'd* in what
 they tell me, yet I am *absolutely Certain* by a *believe* my
Testimony, that what they tell me is *True*. What could
 you do then in that perplexity, being neither in condi-
 tion to allow *Infallibility*, nor avow *Fallibility*, and
 standing gork'd with both the Horns of the Dilemma
 or Contradiction? Why, you were forc'd to call in
 your constant and dear friend [*Sufficient Certainty*]
 to help you out at a dead plunge. For, this is able to
 do more than *Miracle*; this can *dispute* an *Indisputable*,
 and put a *middle* between two *Contradictories*; by shew-
 ing the World a *Certainty*, that is neither *Infallible* nor
Fallible, but between *both*, or *inter* of *both*; we may
 imagin, *half* the one, *half* the other. Lastly, fearing
 that you would be driven at length (as you must) to
 bring your Rule home to particular Points, (and knowing
 the Socinians, and other late sprung Heretical Congre-
 gations (whom you ought to acknowledge Christian
 Churches, since they hold *basely* to that which you
 maintain here is the only Rule of Christian Faith) de-
 ny'd

myd many of those, which you hold *to be revealed*,
 to be *contained* in Scripture; nay, upon the contrary,
 hold they are excluded thence; and that the *opposite* Te-
 nets are *contained* there; therefore you very prudently
 and wariy chang'd [*Altho' Divine Revelation*] which
 were the words of the Question, into [*All matters ne-
 cessary for our Salvation*]. Providing thus a security for
 their Souls at death, tho' you could not for their Er-
 rours; and a kind of Excuse for the Incertainty of your
 Rule, which permitted the *followers* to run astray;
 and withal a Retreat for your self. In all which dex-
 terous Alterations, as this due commendation must be
 allow'd you, to have acted very wisely and politicly;
 so it must be absolutely deny'd you have given any
 Answer at all to the Question. The Words which you
 would obtrude upon us for an Answer, carry indeed a
 pretty shew, and this is off with much cunning; but
 when we come to look into their sense, with an Eye
 directed to the Question, they squint aside to quite o-
 ther matters; and the whole *Reply*, in a manner, is
 made up of *different* Notions from what was ask'd. Nor
 can I like your *Replies* you generally make to our Ques-
 tions, or the *Explications* you make of your own An-
 swers; to any thing better than to that *Mock Exposition*
 of the First Verse in *Genesis*, which *Euther* made for
 your Friend *Zuingline's* interpretation of *Hoc est Corpus*
meum. Dew (God) that is a *Calf* (now created) that
 is *devoured*; *Caelum & Terra* (Heaven and Earth)
 that is a *Hedge Sparrow* with *bones*, and *feather* and all;
 20. You put a pretty Similitude indeed to illustrate
 your own Tenet; but in reference to our main Ques-
 tion, the *Absolute Certainty* of your kind of *Protestant*
Faith by your Grounds, is so far from running on
 four legs, that it is in many regards, lame on the right;
 and

(and indeed onely) foot it ought to stand on, and (which is worse) is perhaps against your self. You resemble the Holy Scripture to a purse full of Gold and Silver; left by a Father, and entrusted to Executours; who tell his Son, this is all his Father left him; and, if they deal truly with him, do certainly deliver all it contains. This the Primitive Church, Christ's Executours, did, by delivering us the Scripture; and assuring us all Divine Truths, which respect Mans Salvation, were contain'd there in the *Lamp*; among which, some were *Gold Points*, some *Sylver Points*; but, having the *Purse* of Scripture, we have the one as well as the other, and, consequently, all matters necessary to our Salvation, these being of greatest moment. Thus stands the Similitude, for, run it cannot; and the summ of it (as far as I apprehend it) amounts to this; that, because Scripture contains all, and Protestants have Scripture, therefore, they have all. A strange kind of Discourse! As if, because they have it in a *Book*, therefore, they have it in their *Minds* or *Souls*, in which, and, no where else, Faith is to reside. And as if a Man, were a jot the more learned, for having purchast Aristotles Works, and reading, and not understanding them.

21. I could except against divers particulars, presum'd on, in this Similitude; as, that you have any Absolute Certainty of your having the *whole* Scripture that was writ, or, that it contains all Divine Revelations; or, that you have the right Copy, to every material particle in it, that may signify Faith, that is, indeed, right Scripture, &c. (or the right *Purse*, &c. But, I am more concern'd for some plausible Insinuations in this Similitude, which may hazard to corrupt the Reader's Judgment. For, however, you decline and avoid it, yet the generality of Readers, whenever they hear any speech of

the *Certainty* of the Grounds of their Faith, they immediately apprehend they are to be Certain of the *particular Points* of their Faith by vertue of those Grounds. And, 'tis a common Errour in many, of an indifferent good Judgment, (I wish it did not sway with some who pass for great Schollars) that, when a thing easily sinks into their *Apprehension*, they are apt to conceit it to be a *Truth*. When, therefore they hear of a Purse, which is a thing very easy to open, (it being no more but pulling two strings which use to run very glib;) and, that Scripture is in many regards, here compar'd to a Purse; they are presently inclin'd to fancy, that, Scripture's sense is as easy to be come at, as 'tis to take money out of a Purse: 'Tis but plucking those easily following strings, and the deed is done. But, alas! Here lies all the difficulty. The *Arians*, *Novatians*, *Socinians*, &c. have all of them this Purse, yet are never the richer; but, for want of skill to open it, and get the Gold and Silver thence, they go away empty, or worse. Now, certainly, those high points, *viz.* A Trinity, Christ's Divinity; the Real Presence, &c. Should deserve to be reckon'd amongst the *Golden Ones*; and, therefore, should be as most valuable, so most easily attainable; being of the highest import for the *Church*, or the *Body* of Christianity. Yet, 'tis granted the Socinians Err in the two first of those Points, for all their acuteness and wit. I except next against the resembling the Contents of it to *Gold* and *Silver*; which certainly *enrich* those who are Possessours of such a *Purse*: whereas, those Sects lay claim to that Purse too with equal Title, yet, coming to open it by their Interpretation, they take the *Dross* of Errour for the pure *Gold* of Truth, and Soul-poysoning *Heresies* for means of *Salvation*. Had I a mind to set up a similitude-mender, and, that you will
needs

needs have it a *Purse*, I should beg your leave to put it thus: Suppose that *Purse's* Mouth were tyed up with a knot of such a mysterious contrivance, that none could open it (I mean still, as to the understanding the Mysteries of our Faith) but those who knew the *Mind* of the Bequeather; and, that the *Church*, to which it was left as a Legacy, had knowledge of his *Mind*, and so could open it; while others tortur'd their Wits with little tricks and inventions, turning and winding the ambiguous folds of it, some one way, some another; and yet entangled their own thoughts, more and more, while they went about to untie the Knots: that so perplex't them.

22. This is the true case. You make account *containing* does all the business; whereas, 'tis nothing at all to our purpose, which is (in the final Intention of it) about the *Absolute Certainty of your Faith*; unless we have equal assurance that you can get out thence what's contain'd there, as you pretend to have, that 'tis contain'd. Now, it cannot be deny'd, but the Primitive Church was imbued with *Christ's sense* by the Preaching of the Apostles and their immediate Successours; and so had a *sure* and *proper* Way to interpret Scripture; and, while this *sense* was still deliver'd down, they could not fail of an absolutely Certain Rule to understand it right.

But, there steps up now one Heretick, then another, opposing himself to the *sense* of the Church; and, relying on the dextery of his own wit, will needs find out contrivances how to open the *Scripture's* Meaning by wayes of his private Skill: But falls into multitudes of Errours, finding no way to unfold the deeply-mysterious Book; having refus'd to make use of the right means, viz. *Christ's sense* descending in the Church by *Tradition*. Whence, notwithstanding all his little Arts

and boasting presumption like the Fox in the Fable,
Vas lambit, Pultem non attingit.

23. Mistake me not : I do not mean Scriptures Letter is not clear in such passages as concern Common Morality, or the Ten Commandments ; with the Sense of which every one is imbu'd by the Light of Nature. Nor in matters of Fact, such as were most of those *Marks* or Signs to know the *Messias* by, foretold us by the Prophets ; our Saviour's doing such and such Miracles, his *going beyond Jordan, &c.* Nor in Parables explain'd by himself, and such like. But, in Dogmatical Points or *Tenets*, which are *Spiritual*, and oftentimes profound *Mysteries*, (and, of these, by the way, I desire still to be understood, when I speak of the Certainty of the Letter or Sense of Scripture, for with other Passages I meddle not) as the Tenet of a Trinity, Christ's God-head, the Real Presence of his Body in the Sacrament ; and such like ; which have a vast Influence upon Christian Life ; either immediately, or else in a higher Nature, being (as it were) Principles to many other Articles of Faith, which depend on their Truth. One would verily think, I say, that such as these should be some of your *Golden Points*, or else there were none at all contain'd in your *Purse* : Yet, we experience, That even in such as *these*, your Rule is not intelligible enough to keep the Followers of it from erring. So that, let your *Purse* have never so *Golden* and *Siluer* a lining, you are never the *richer*, unless you can come at it, or can certainly distinguish the pure *Gold* of *Truth* from the impure Dross of *Error*. Your Similitude then comes not home to your purpose, nor shews that you have therefore *all* your *Faith*, or *all* *Divine Revelations*, because you have a Book which you judge *contains* them. Let's see now if it does not make against you. You put the *Doctrine* (or
Points)

Points of Faith to be the Gold and Silver contain'd in the *Purse*; and, consequently that must be the *Purse* into which that Doctrin of Faith was put by Christ our Saviour; and this was evidently the *Heads*, and *Hearts* of the Faithful. For the *Points* of Faith, being so many Divine *Truths*, are onely contain'd in Men's *Minds* properly; and, *Words* being, by their very Definition, but *Signes* of what is in our *Minds*, *Truths* are no more really in a *Book*, than *Wine* is really in a *Bush* which signifies it. Since then those *Truths* were onely in the Breast of Christ Originally, and, after him, in that of the Apostles; and their Thoughts could not be communicated, nor consequently the Gold and Silver deliver'd to the Legatees, otherwise than by signifying it, which can onely be done by one of these ways, by *Living Voice and Practice*, or by *Writing*; that is by *Tradition* or *Scripture*, neither of these can with any Sense be liken'd to the *Purse* it self, into which the money is to be put, or answer comparatively to it; but they are both of them *Wayes*, *Means* or *Methods* of putting these heavenly Riches into it's Proper *Purse*, the *Souls* of the Faithful. Of these two Ways our Saviour chose the *First*; which was Teaching his Doctrin orally, for he writ nothing; and by doing thus, told us it was the *better*: For, it had been against his Infinit Wisdom to chuse the *worser* way for Himself to make use of, and leave the *better* to his Servants. Nor, did his servants, the Apostles, affect the Way of *Writing*, so as to use it onely; but, on the contrary, they made use of this *Oral* Way of Preaching constantly, and that of *Writing* (for the most part at least, if not altogether) occasionally. They converted the present Church by their *Preaching*; they comforted the future Church by leaving many most edifying Words, and actions

Actions of our Blessed Saviour, *Written*; which being *Particulars*, and not breaking out openly into Christian *Practise*, might otherwise in likelihood, (at least to a great degree) have been lost to succeeding generations; besides the abetment their Writings give to Faith it self, when certainly interpreted, and rightly understood. So that, according to this discourse of yours we should either have never a Purse to put Points of Faith in, for you take no notice of the Souls of the Faithful into which they are properly put, and in which onely they are in reality contain'd: Or, if you will needs call that a Purse which contains them meerly as a *Sign* does the thing signify'd, or as that which may signify to us our Faith, you must put *two* Purfes: *Tradition* and *Scripture*: And then the onely Question is, out of which Purse, we can with more Certainty get it. That is, whether a Living Container, which can give us perfect light of it's *Sense* by *all the best ways imaginable; or the Dead Letter, which, as Experience demonstrates, can neither clear it's Sense to Private Understandings; nor, if we *doubt* of it's Meaning, and had a mind to *ask* it, could either *bear* or *reply*, much less pertinently, and appositely speak to the Asker as oft as he had occasion to press still for satisfaction. Again, the *Written* Instrument or Means of putting this heaven-stampt coyn in our Souls, is an Ignoble Instrument in comparison; being in reality, as to it's Material part, or taken as abtracted from the Sacred Sense which is signify'd by it, nothing but Ink thus figur'd on Paper. Whereas, the material part of the *other* is the most Noble that can be found under Heaven it self: *viz.* the Church which all Christians must acknowledge to be the *Sponse of Christ*, the *Pillar and Ground of Truth*, and consisting of the Living Temples of the Holy Ghost; That, for whose edificati-

*See above,
Sect. 2. & 3.

on the Scripture was writ; and, so, holds proportion with it as the Means does with the End, which is in a manner Infinit. Nay, That, for which all the Material World was created, and the Oeconomy of it still carry'd on, from the first beginning of Time to it's last Period. Lastly, That for whose sake God himself was made Man, and dy'd a most cruel Death on a Cross. So that 'tis unconceivable, that it can enter into the thoughts of any intelligent man who believes this to be the due Character of the Church, there should be any competition betwixt the Letter of Scripture and it; or that it can possibly be doubted to which of them (all things consider'd) we ought to attribute most in looking after Faith. But, to return to your similitude. The sum of it is this: That the Gold and Silver you speak of, being the Doctrin of Faith; not the *Scripture*, but the *Heads*, and *Hearts* of the *Faithful*, (that is, of the Church) does really and indeed *contain* it; and, consequently, this onely can with any propriety be compar'd to a *Purse*. That, both Tradition and Scripture are to be liken'd to the several Ways of putting the Heavenly Treasure of Faith, into this Purse, or Faith into the Souls of the Faithful. Lastly, that taking them as *containing* them, as signes do the things signify'd, it is not their *containing* this Treasure does us any good; but the *delivering it out* to us; no more than a man is better for having a Trunk full of Money so circumstanc't that he could never come at it; and, that, between these *two ways* of coming at this Treasure, or their *delivering it out* to us there is no comparifon, whether we regard the Intelligibleness, or Providential Establishment of those respective Instruments in order to such an End. So that your similitude, how prettily soever it look't at first, hath one misfortune very common to such fine useles toys,

roys, that is, to be good for nothing: for it neither comes up to the Question, nor futes with your own Tenet.

24. But ere we part from this Point, it were not amiss to examin a little that cautious expression of yours [*all things necessary for salvation*] into which you change that bold assertion that you are *absolutely certain* you now hold all the same Doctrin that was taught by Christ and his Apostles. I ask you then, what do you mean by those words [*necessary for Salvation*] which mince the matter so warily? Do you think Christ taught any *unnecessary* Points, or did a *needless* action! Sure you will not say it. And yet my self will grant too, and agree with you that fewer Means than the Knowledge of *all* Christ taught, may suffice for the Salvation of *some* particular persons. What follows then, but, that, since they are *all* necessary for some body, and yet not all necessary for *every* particular person, more of them are necessary for *one* man than for *another*, and all of them necessary for the body of the Church: whose Pastours are to instruct their Children in them, and apply the Efficacy of them to their Souls, as their capacities admit, and exigencies require. For, tho' some few may be saved without the knowledge of such & such Points, (slender Motives being enough for their circumstances,) yet multitudes of others may require incomparably more effectual Means, to buoy them up from the World, and raise them to heaven, and so, they would certainly miscarry for want of them. Particularly, the points now mention'd, are of such a high and general Influence, that, without these, the Devotion of a very great portion of the Church, would be enfeebled, many of the Souls that want them be lost eternally, and others be but dim Stars in the Glorious Firmament of Heaven, in comparison of what they might

might have been, had their Minds been cultivated with such elevating considerations. And, can the Church, which God has entrusted with those Souls, think that 'tis agreeable to his Will, his Flock should either dy, or fall short of the full growth they might have had in the plentiful Pastorage he had provided for them? It rests then for you, either to shew those Points not *necessary* for the Generality; and that your Grounds are sufficient to give men, both as able and as willing (for ought appears) to understand Scripture right as your self is, *Absolute Certainty* of Them (which is to confute Experience, and dispute against your own Knowledge,) or else to confess ingenuously you have no *Absolute Certainty* of even the highest Fundamentals, and *most necessary Points for the Salvation of Mankind*.

¶ 24. Thus much to shew that your Rule gives you no *Absolute Certainty* of all such matters as are *necessary for your Salvation*, with reference to the *Points of Faith*; to certify which, Experience assures us it does not reach. Now, should we speak of the *Assent* of Faith, the *Short Discourse*, p. 30, 31. of my former Letter, demonstrates clearly you can have no *Absolute Certainty* of any one, and so cannot with reason affirm your Faith is *True*; since, wanting *Absolute Certainty* that Christ taught it, it may be *False*. The same point has been prest upon you in *Faith vindicated*, *Reason against Raillery*, *Erreur non-plust*, and diverse other Books: yet tho' it was the most important objection that is or can be imagin'd, as plucking up by the roots all your Faith, and destroying it from it's very Foundation; no return could ever yet be obtain'd, nor candid Reason produc't, but onely a put-off with *sufficient Certainty*, and such dow-bak't words; without being able or even endeavouring, to shew that Grounds less than *Absolutely Certain* can possibly be thus *sufficient*.

for the *Nature*, the *Ends* and *Uses* of Faith. But 'tis
high time to return to our Disputants.

P. 18.

26. Against this pretended Answer of yours, you introduce Mr. M. *suggesting several things*. First, *As to difference of Translations*. To which you reply, *Doth Mr. M. think our Faith is to be resolv'd into the Original Texts?* What he thinks, you know better than you would seem to do. He cannot but think, if he may believe you, that you resolve your Faith into the *Letter of Scripture*. He cannot but think that by these words you mean the *Right Letter*; for, otherwise, it would not be *Scripture*: Nor can he think, or you either, it can be the *Right Letter*, unless it have a *Right Translation*, and this, from a *True Copy*; nor that any Copy can be *True*, unless conformable to the *True Original*. And, if there can be any failure in any of these, nay, if you have not Absolute Certainty of all these, you cannot have (by your Grounds) any Absolute Certainty of your *Faith*: For, if the *Letter* be wrong, all is wrong that is built on it: and it may be wrong, for ought you know; notwithstanding the Testimony of all Christian Churches relying on this Way of attesting the Truth of the *Letter*. For, you can never shew that all those Churches consented to apply their utmost diligence to examine and attest all the several Translations, made in their respective languages; or witness that they came from the true Original; or took the most exquisite care that was possible, to see that the Translators and the Copiers did their duty. Which, had they held the *Letter* to be their only Rule of Faith, and consequently, that *All Faith*, that is, the very *Being* of the present and future Church, and their own *Salvation* too, depended on the *Scripture*, they were obliged in conscience, and under the highest Sin, above all things in the

the World, so have done; and this, with the exactest care imaginable: Your Grounds then, notwithstanding all you have said or alledged hitherto to ensure the Letter, make no Provision for the Absolute Certainty of the Written Rule, nor consequently of your Faith.

Q. 27. But what becomes then (say you) of the *Vulgar Latin Translation*? Answer, In our Grounds no harm at all: For the Canon of the Books comes down by the Testimony of all Christian Churches that are truly Christian; and the Doctrine of Christ, transfus'd into the hearts of the succeeding Faithful ever since the beginning, both taught them *how*, and oblig'd them to correct the Copy in those particular Texts that concern'd Faith, if any Error through the carelessness, inattentiveness, or malice of the Translators or Transcribers at any time had crept in. By the same Means as you can now a-days correct the Copy in those Texts, that might express some Point of Morality, in case it were corrupted, and deviated from Christian Manners; viz. by virtue of the Sense of that Practical Tenet you were imbued with formerly; & this, even tho' you had no other Copy or Text to amend it by: Inasmuch that, how good an opinion so ever you had of the Copy, Translator, Printer or Corrector of the Press; yet for all that, you would conclude they had erred, and the Letter was faulty, rather than forgo the Doctrine so firmly rivetted in your heart by the constant Teaching and Practice of the Christian world. As for other particular Words of an inferior Concern, they could be best corrected by multitudes of other ancient Copies (the Churches Care still going along) in which too the greatest care that was possible to rectify it's Errors was taken by the Council of Trent; that so it might be as exact as Human Diligence could well render it. A thing, as far as my memo-

Ibid.

1614 B. 11. 11. 1
1670 C. 11. 11. 1
1671

ry Reathes, never order'd or very much regarded by a
 ny Coimcil formerly. But I foresee, your method of confuting, (which
 is to muster up Extrinsecall objections not at all to the
 purpose) will naturally lead you to discredit this way of
 correcting Scripture's Letter in passages belonging to
 Faith, as *singular* or *New*; This being the same your
 Friend G. B. objected to the Way of Tradition it self;
 as may be seen above; Sect. 10. Such piddling Excepti-
 ons, dress'd up prettily in gay language, go a great way and
 make a fine shew in your Controversies; and, which is a
 benefit of most advantage to you, excuse you from bring-
 ing any *Intrinsicall* Arguments; tho' these onely are
 such as *conclude* any thing, and tho' you are bound by
 your precise Duty to produce *such*: Wherefore, to ward
 this blow, I shall alledge the Judgment of that Learned,
 and Excellent Personage, Sir *Thomas More*, our first
 Modern English Controversist; who, writing, not a-
 gainst you in defence of our Grounds, but to another
Catholick Divine, expresses candidly, his Sentiment in
 these words: [*Ego certe hoc persuadeo mihi, idq. (ut opi-
 nor) vero, quicquid ad fidem astringendam faciat, non esse
 a quovis melius versum, quam ab ipsis Apostolis prescrip-
 tum. Ideoque si hic, quovis, in Latini codicibus occurrat
 quidquam quod aut contra Fidem aut mores ferre vi-
 deatur: Scripturarium interpretes aut ex alio alibi ver-
 bis quid illud sibi velit dubium expiscantur: aut ad Vi-
 tum Evangelium fidel, quod per universam Ecclesiam
 in eorum Fidelium infusum est: quod etiam, priusquam
 scriberetur a quoquam, Apostolis a Christo, ab Apostolis
 Univerſo Mundo prædicatum est, dubius ejusmodi ser-
 mones applicant, atque ad infensibilem veritatis Regu-
 lam examinent: ad quam si non satis adaptari queant, aut
 sese non intelligere, aut monitosum esse codicem, non du-
 bitent*]

Trist ad Mar-
 tinum Dorpi-
 am.

hitherto This is my Judgment, and (say) I concerning a
True one; that whatever (Text) is useful to build Faith
 on, was not better translated by any than it was wisely
 the Apostles themselves. And therefore, as oft as any thing
 occurs in the Latin Bock, that seems to make against Faith
 or Good Manners, the Interpreters of Scripture, either get
 thee from other Words in other places what that doubt should
 mean; or they compare those doubtful sayings to the **Whole**
Gospel of Faith, which was infused into the hearts of the
 Faithful, throughout the Universal Church; Which, before
 any man writ it, was Preach'd by Christ to the Apostles,
 and by the Apostles to the whole World; & examine them
 by the inflexible Rule of Faith; with which if they can
 not make it square, they conclude, that either they do not
 understand it, or the Book is faulty [where he passes by
 the former way with a sleight word [expiscantur] fish
 out the sense; but insists on the latter way of preserving
 the Copy sincere, as Certain and Proper. His Notion
 is] I must not pretermitt your Objection pag. 1 that
 the Ancient Christian Church never knew any thing concern-
 ing this Method of resolving Faith into meer Oral Tradition.
 I would desire you to add [Practical] to Oral; at least
 to conceive it to be understood all the way, that being our
 True and constantly avow'd Tenet. But, did the Anti-
 ent Church, in reality, never know any thing of this
 way? 'Tis wonderful you should not understand they
 meant the same as we do, unless they speak the self-same
 Words, and make the same Discourses we do now. Did
 not they all hold, that who taught any thing contrary
 to the Doctrine delivered down by the Church, was a
 Heretick? Did any of them say that the Churches Tra-
 dition of a Doctrine, as Christs, was liable to Errour?
 Did any of them hold that it was lawful for your *Sober*
Enquirer to rely on his Private Interpretation of the Scri-
 pture.

pture, and relinquish the sense of the Church, which is
 the true Point: Not once: 'Tis one thing to say they oft
 quoted Scripture against Hereticks, who had rejected
 the Authority of the Church, (even the Council of *Trent*
 does so;) another, to say they had no firmer *Ground*
 for their *Faith*, but their own *private Judgment* of it's
Yeast. 'Tis one thing to give it high Commendations for
 it's Excellency, Divine Doctrine, Usefulness and Suffici-
 ency for the Ends for which it was Ordained by God:
 'Tis another, to say that, in those places which relate
 to *Spiritual Points* and high *Mysteries* of our *Faith*, it is
 so clear, that, private Fancies can with Absolute Cer-
 tainty fix upon it's true *sense*, and, on that, Ground their
Faith. 'Tis one thing to say, sometimes, it's *Plain* and
Evident, when they are Arguing against Hereticks: this
 is a thing not unusual even among us, when we are
 disputing, and have an opinion that what we alledge is
 manifest; and those Fathers or Councils which insisted
 on it, had good reason to have that opinion of what
 they alledge'd, having the Doctrine of *Faith*, (Scripture's
 best Interpreter) in their hearts: Besides, when
 there is full assurance of it's sense, who doubts but it is
 of a vast *Authority* too, being in that case the same as if
 the Apostle or Christ himself were there, and spoke his
 Mind in the Point under debate: Whence they con-
 futed Hereticks with defining from Scripture; upon the
 assurance that they had the true sense of it *another Way*,
 than the Heretick had by his *private Interpretation*.
 But, 'tis another thing to say, that, as manag'd by Pri-
 vate Judgments, working on the bare Letter, or relying
 on Fallible Interpreters, it is so unavoidably convictive,
 beyond all possibility of giving it another plausible
 sense, that all Mankind must think him a Renouncer of
 the clear Light of Reason, or stark blind with Passion
 and

and interest, and abhor him as such; who shall interpret it after another manner. And such the Rule of Faith must be; otherwise none could with Conscience think or say any Heretick is obstinate; nor any man (no not the Church itself) condemn him, much less abhor him for being such; as was ever her Custom. All the former Perfections we as heartily, fully, and constantly ascribe to Scripture as any Protestant in the world: nay, we say moreover, that this want of Clearness which unqualifies it for being a Rule, springs from a very high perfection in it; viz. its *deep Sense*; only this one, of giving every particular man, who by his private Judgment interprets it, such assurance of its sense as is competent to Ground his Faith on, we cannot grant; this being no less contrary to common Reason, than 'tis even to Experience also. To return then to your Objection, You see *Scilicet* that the Ancient Fathers were not such Strangers to this Method of *Tradition* we follow and explicate. And you might have observ'd many others both nam'd and cited, *Superfooting* p. 131. to 137. What matters it that they did not express That our Tenet, or Dilate upon it in such Terms as we do now, so they taught others to hold to what was deliver'd, and not to rely on their own private Interpretations of Scripture against the present Churches Doctrine: Since in doing this, they held the substance of that which we have since more diffusely explain'd, and reduc'd our Discourses to more Methodical and Formal Resolutions of Faith, which were not so much in fashion in former Ages. Besides, you are not to be told we both *have & would* alledge Fathers enow for our Tenet, and the Obligation to hold to the Doctrine deliver'd from Fathers, that is to *Tradition*; and how smartly and unanswerably they press it against Hereticks, as a certain Determiner of the Controversies.

controversies between the Catholics and Them. On the other side, how often they complain'd of the *Uncertainty* of the Scripture interpreted by private Men, as Grounding all Heresies; by reason of the mysterious Obscurity of the Letter, and its liableness to be misinterpreted and misunderstood. Whereas, it was never heard that the Rule of *Tradition* taken in the sense, in which we hold it (*viz.* for a Delivery of a Practical Doctrin, publickly preach'd to great multitudes at first, practis'd by them, and held, and recommended as *Divine*, and the way to Salvation) did ever give rise to any Heresy, and impossible it should. Which one Reflection to a Considerate Man, is sufficient to conclude the whole present Controversy about the *Rule of Faith*.

30. From the *Qualities* requisite to make Scripture's Letter a *Rule of your Faith*, we come to consider the *Quantity* it ought to have, or the *Number of Books*; which you tell us p. 19. Mr. M. suggested. In order to which, I have onely two things to ask you. 1. Whether, as I said formerly, you have any *unanimous Consent of the Christian Church*, that there was never a Book *lost* that was writ by some who were *Divinely inspir'd*; and, consequently, did contain *some* Divine Revelations? Or, if you cannot prove but there was, how do you know but those Divine Revelations, which that Book or Books contain'd, were not different from, or to be superadded to those, contain'd in the Canon we have now? If you cannot prove these two Points, then 'tis manifest you cannot prove with Absolute Certainty, that the Books we have now, contain'd all the Divine Revelations. 2. You insist onely on this Universal Testimony for the Canonical *Books* of the New Testament; but, I would know whether this Testimony reaches to each

each *Chapter* and every *Vers*e of those *Chapters*, nay, each material *Word* in those *Verses*? If it does not; as you neither say, nor with any Reason can say (for 'tis hard to prove the former, & impossible to prove the latter but by our Rule) then you are as far from your Faith as ever; unless you bring some other Testimony that is *Absolutely Certain*, to assure you that such and such a *Vers*e, which you would quote and rely on for such and such a Point of Faith, nay, the main and most significant *Word* in that *Vers*e is *true Scripture*: which I am sure you cannot: For, what Testimony else can be invented to do this, if the other, which was of the *whole Christian Church*, cannot reach it? Is there any possible way to ascertain this, but by our Doctrin Rule? Upon this occasion, pray inform me with what reason you could reflect so severely pag. 15. on the Church of *Rome*; for not receiving the *Epistle to the Hebrews* in St. *Hierom's* Time, as soon as other Churches; and, not on the Greek Churches, (which you use to prefer before the Latin) who, in the same Father's time, refus'd to admit the *Apocalypse*? The accepting or not accepting such Books, even according to your own Doctrin, depended on their being satisfied of the *Evidence produced for their Apostolical Authority*; and so was an Act of *Prudence*, antecedent to the Judgment or Determination of any Church, whether Greek or Latin. But, so unreasonable is your pique against the Church of *Rome*, that she cannot act *prudently* without forfeiting her *Infallibility*. Tho', another man would have acknowledg'd, it was rather a very commendable cautiousness in the Latin & Greek Church too, not to admit into such a sacred Roll, Books that were not yet clearly prov'd to be authentrickly such; than a blameable Lapse, or so heinous a Crime, that for committing it, she must needs

lose all her Title to Christ's promis'd Assistance.

31. This gives me occasion to ask you what becomes of Your *Rule*, and, consequently, of Your *Faith* all that while? If the Letter of the Canonical Books, that is, of the whole *Canon* of the New Testament be your *Rule*, and those Books were *part* of this *Canon*, they must necessarily be *part* of your *Rule* too; whence it follows that your *Rule* was not *Intire*, but *deficient* for some hundreds of years, till the whole *Canon* was Collected and Acknowledg'd. I see you do but complement with the Primitive Church of the first 300 years; and, that you onely cry it up to avoid the unkindness, which the succeeding Ages shew to your Cause; for, by your Doctrine, you cannot but hold that the Ages which follow'd it, are to be *prefer'd*: Since *These* had your *intire* *Rule*, the *Others* wanted *some parts* of it; and sometimes held but *three parts* of it, *half* of it, or less, (and so, by your Principles, were but *three quarters* or *half* Christians;) according as the several pieces came by degrees to be acknowledg'd, and universally accepted. I doubt Mr. M's Discourse about the *Number of Books*, more perplexes you, than you are willing to make shew of. For, pray, *how many* of these Books go to make up your *Rule of Faith*? If any one, or some few, then you should not have stood upon the *Canon we have now*; that is, *all* the Apostolical Books, or *Scripture* in general. If *all* the Canonical Writings be your *Rule*, then perhaps the Primitive Christians had but *half* their Faith, or *less*; it may be *none at all*, because, wanting yet those other Books, they wanted necessary places to *compare* those Texts with they already had; which is a great part of your Method to find out your Faith in Scripture. Pray, satisfy us about this exact *Number of Books*, and how many will just serve the turn; and, make something

thing cohere; for, I cannot for my heart as yet find any thing that does. You talk to us of a *Purse*, and say it must be full; but, when we come to look at it more narrowly, it appears to have been for some time but *half* a *Purse*, and wanted *one side* of it, at least had a great *Hole* in it: so that you put us into an apprehension, that many of the *Gold* and *Silver Points* might have drop't out of it in the time of the Primitive Church; by which Church notwithstanding, and no other, in our disputes about Faith, you seem heartily willing to be judg'd. But, let us examin a little the *Consent of all* (your) *Christian Churches for Scripture*, you make such brags of. In the first place marches and leads the Van, your *Christian Church* of the Noble Arch-Heretick *Marcion*; who blot'ted out of the Canon the Epistle to the *Hebrews*, that to *Titus*, and both those to *Timothy*; who admitted onely St. *Luke's Gospel* to be Divine, and *rejected* all the Epistles of St. *Paul*, as an *Apostate from the Law*. In the next rank, go abreast those three Famous *Christian Churches* of *Ebion*, *Valentinus*, and *Cerintus*. Of which (c) the First admitted onely St. *Matthews Gospel*; the (d) second, onely St. *John's*; and the third, onely St. *Mark's*. After them, come others, mentioned by St. *Hierom* and *Epiphanius*, who in a manner brought all into doubt; especially if Faith depended in those days on the comparing of places; for, they held that diverse things both in the *Old Testament* and the *New*, were not inspir'd by *GOD*, but writ by a *Human Spirit*. I need not acquaint you, that *Luther*, *Brentius* & *Chemnitzius*, did revive the old Doubts about the Epistle to the *Hebrews* and the *Apocalypse*, of later dayes. Nor need it be recounted how many Orthodox Christian Churches did not accept diverse Books formerly. And, tho' afterwards, as you say well, they came by degrees to fix on

P. 31.

Dr. S's first Letter. p. 7.

(a) Epiphan. hæ. 24. n. 9.

(b) Iren. lib. 3.

(c) Iren. lib. 3. cap. 1.

(d) Iren. lib. 2. cap. 26.

Hier. ad Panl at Eustoch. in Præm. Ep. ad Philom. Epip. hæ. 76.

P. 15.

the Certain Cases of the New Testament; yet I am apt to judge that this was not perform'd by Immediate Testimony: For, the Witnesses were long ago dead, and their Grand-Fathers too, who could attest that such a Book was indeed, to *their knowledge*, written by such an Apostle or Evangelist. It descended then by *Oral Tradition* in those respective Churches. Whence, as that Tradition was not so Practical, so it was restrain'd to some few in each Church, and was withal, very narrow at first in comparison of our Tradition for Christ's Doctrine; which was, in a manner, universally and publicly preach't and practis'd. Now the *strength* of a Tradition, and the *largeness* of it are to be taken from the largeness of the first Attestation; and all that after-Ages can do, when they attest such things, is to witness that they received it from some others; but so, that the Tradition was still *narrower* as it came nearer the fountain; which very much weakens it. By what other Lights the Church guided her self in her accepting such and such Books for Canonical Scripture, belongs to another place. Your Tradition then was not Universal for Scripture in the first 300 years, and its Original Attestation was *weak* in comparison of that which was for *Doctrine*.

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32. I have little to say to your *Explicit* or *Implicit* Points contain'd in Scripture: For, I see they are both equally to no purpose, while but contain'd there, till you bring us a Rule to *interpret* the Letter with *Absolute Certainty*. If any ought to be *explicitly* there, none can have so good a Title to it as those high and most Fundamental Articles spoken of so often; yet we see there are no places producible for *them*, but may have *other* senses given them; and bear (as experience shews us) not yet ended, and, for ought we know, endless Disputes

neces among your *Sober Enquirer* attending to your Rule. Only I a little wonder you should say *not sufficient* for your purpose, that all *Doctrines of Faith necessary to Salvation* are contained in (the Letter of) *Scripture*, either explicitly or implicitly. If they be necessary to *Salvation*, they must be necessary to be believed or known to be there; for they must save men, by believing them, and acting according to that Belief, or no way; and, if they be only implicitly there, they are as yet unknown, or not believed. So that, according to you, that is a Point necessary to *Salvation*, which does not at all conduce to it. But, I wonder more at the happiness of your *Sober Enquirer* to whom, you affirm and stand to it stoutly, those Implicit Points will become Explicit without the help of the Church; and yet you call it assuming, in the Church of Rome, to do the same, or declare the Sense of such Articles. Certainly, this *Sober Enquirer* is your special Darling, and Favourit. He, tho' a private person, can discover those Explicit Points; and I suppose may declare them too, to as many as he pleases; for how can he in Charity do less? But alas! The silly insignificant Church, can do nothing at all; she must submit to the wondrous Gifts, you have bestow'd upon the Rabble, and her Governors and Pastors be accounted Tyrants if they shall dare to encroach upon their high Prerogatives, or presume to share in their Priviledges of being able to unfold or know the Explicit Meaning of Scripture - Texts: For, in case they can know this, and this Knowledge be good for the Faithful (as it is, being as you say necessary to *Salvation*) 'tis without question they may declare them, or make them known to others: nay, and use their Authority too (if you will vouchsafe to allow them any) to edify the Faithful by making this Knowledge sink into them. Nor can it prejudice their Reason, that the

Ibid.

Ibid.

The Church obliges them to *believe* them; for this is no more than obliging them to act *according to Reason*; which tells them that, since they must either trust themselves or their Pastours in such things, and the Pastours must be incomparably better qualify'd than themselves are, for the discovering of such mysterious Truths, and withall appointed by God to teach them; 'tis far more Rational to *submit to their* Judgments in such things, than to *use their own*. But, indeed, you have reason to stand up for your *Sober Enquirer*; for all Ring-leaders of any Heresy, or Faction against the Church, took this very Method in their proceedings. The Spirit of Pride, which possess'd them, principled them with these Rational and Peaceable Maxims, that they had Authority to *judge* their Judges, *teach* their Teachers, *direct* their Guides, and that their own Wit *excell'd* that of all the World before them. But, when a Faction was form'd into a good lusty Body, the Scripture-Rule was laid aside again; so that 'tis doubtful whether we have had ever a *Sober Enquirer* since, as was shewn in my First Letter Sect. 25.

33. You desire to see this Power of the Church in Scripture in *Express Terms*; and we tell you we need not let you see it in Scripture at all: for Tradition, & even Common Sense, tells us, that the Church has Power to feed, and instruct her Flock; and enlighten them in what she knows, and they are ignorant of. If you demand how the Roman Church came by this knowledge of making Implicit Points *Explicit*? I answer, by Tradition, giving her the Sense of Christ's whole Law, and each Intire point of it; and by the Light of Nature purify'd by supernatural knowledges antecedently; as also by her Application, when occasion required, to reflect upon, and penetrate deeply into that

Sense;

Sense; which enables her to explicate her own thoughts (for the Points of Faith) more clearly now; which she had indeed before, but did not so distinctly look into them, or set her self to explain them. But pray, what *express* Scripture has your *Sober Enquirer* for his Power to make the *Implicit* Points *Explicit*? You reckon up diverse agreeablenesses p. 21. why this should be; but not one word of *express* Scripture do you pretend to for it. And if himself pretend to any such Power, besides that it will look a little odd that God should take more care of *private men* than of his *Church*, let him either shew us he has better means Natural or Supernatural to do this, than the Church has, or he discovers his Pride and Folly both to pretend to it. You say p. 21. that the Church of Rome has nowhere declar'd in Council it has any such Power; viz. to declare explicitly Points imply'd in Scripture. But First, you may please to know It has made such a declaration Sect. 4. where it defines that it belongs to the Church, *judicare de vero sensu et interpretatione Scripturarum*, to judge of the true sense, and Interpretation of Scripture; Next, It, accordingly, proceeds upon this Power, as I shall manifest by three several Instances. One Sess. 13. cap. 4. where it explains those Texts, *Luc. 22. Jo. 6. and 2 Cor. 11.* to be meant of being truly Christ's Body; and declares thence that the Church was ever perswaded of the Doctrine of Transubstantiation. Another, Sess. 14. cap. 7. Where it declares the Text, *1 Cor. 1. Let a man examin himself,* &c. to be understood by the Custom (or Practice) of the Church, of, *Sacramental Confession*, necessary to be us'd before receiving the Sacrament by all those who are conscious to themselves of mortal sin. The Third, Sess. 14. cap. 1. where it interprets that Text of *S. James* cap. 5. to be by *Apostolical Tradition* understood of the

the Sacrament of *Extreme Unction*. Which places you do not judge so much as *implicitly* to contain that Sense, but hold that they contain another thing. How the Churches declaring explicitly Points descending by Tradition, makes no new Articles of Faith, is discours't above, *See*. 4, 5, 6, 7. By which, you may see that Mr. G. and Mr. M. whom (pag. 72.) you will needs set at variance, are, notwithstanding, very good Friends. For, if the Church knew the *sense* which is contain'd in that place, *before*; the Doctrin is *Old*, tho' the declaring it to be signifi'd by that particular Text, be perhaps *New*. I say perhaps; for, in some signal passages, much in use in the Churches Preaching, Catechisms and Practise; I doubt not but that, not only the particular Doctrin, but also that it is signifi'd by such a Text, comes down by Tradition in the *Ecclesia docens*. Notwithstanding the agreeableness of these two Positions, you triumph mightily here, p. 23. that, *Thus Mr. M. has answer'd Mr. G's Demonstration*. As much as to say, *I know not for my life what to say to it my self, and therefore, would gladly shift it off upon any Body, so I could handsomely rid my Hands of it*. Thus, you make (for you can make any thing by your Method of *mistaking every thing*.) the Council of Trent clash with the Church of Rome (a hard Task one would think!) by *pretending to interpret Scripture according to the unanimous sense of the Fathers*; which you judge contradicts the making known, and obliging Men to believe that explicitly now, which they were not oblig'd to by any precedent Sense or Explication. What mean the words [Men] and [They] If they signify *all men*, and intend to signify that *no man* knew those imply'd Points before, but *all* might hap to contradict them, you mistake our Tenet; for, we judge it absolutely impossible that *more* of

of the Fathers should reflect more attentively on the full sense of the Points deliver'd, or look into their own thoughts as Faithful; and, therefore, it was much more impossible they should *unanimously contradict* those Points. And, unless they did so, the Council of Trent, and the Church of Rome may, by the Grace of God, very well correspond in their Doctrine for all your mistake. For the Intention of the Fathers in that Decree (Sess. 4.) was to repress the insolency of Hereticks wresting the Scripture to their own private sentiments [*contrary to the Sense of the Church, or the unanimous Consent of the Fathers.*] And how this is *directly contrary* to this power of obliging to believe something, as in Scripture, explicitly *now*, which was not so known *before*, is unconceivable; unless you will prove that that *Explicit* Sense is *directly contrary* to the unanimous Consent of the Fathers or the Church, which you will never do. But, 'tis a trivial Exploit to make Mr. M. clash with Mr. G. or the Church of Rome with the Council of Trent; you can make that very Church clash with her self — *Suis et ipsa Roma* — and that openly and professedly too: Nay, which is most wonderful, fall out with her self about her own Prerogatives. For, you tell us p. 23. that *tho' it has assum'd this Power* now spoken of, yet it *still disown'd* it. Now to *assume* a Power, is to *challenge* it; and to *disown* it, is to *renounce* it; which hang together much after the fate of all your Discourie hitherto. This Church of Rome is a most monstrous kind of Creature: It goes *backwards*, and *forwards*, blows and saps, declares *for* and *against*, and all at once; but we must imagin her to be such onely as she stands pourtray'd in Dr. S.'s Fancy.

34. Your main Stratagem to elude all this discourse, remains yet to be more fully detected, tho' it has been

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occasionally toucht at diverse times formerly. 'Tis this, that you are now upon the *General Ground of Faith*, and not the *particular Acts of it*, or the *particular Certainty as to this or that Doctrine*. And you seem to have reason for it too, because the *main point in Dispute* was, whether *Protestants could shew any Ground of Absolute Certainty for their Faith*. And this you think justifies you for hovering in the ayr, and onely talking of your *Scripture-Rule in common*, without lighting on or applying it to any one particular point contain'd in that Rule. But this will avail you nothing. For, first; Neither does our Discourse pinch upon any *one* particular Point, but upon the *Uncertainty of your Faith in general*, or on *all* your Points of Faith at once as built on *your Ground*. So that, 'tis the pretended *Ground of your Faith* we are disputing against all the while, and not *any one* particular Tenet. We bring, indeed, Instances now and then of some particular Articles; but, 'tis to shew that, if your Ground has not power to ascertain absolutely those *most Fundamental Points*, it has power to ascertain *none*; and, so, is no *Ground of Faith at all*. Secondly, A pretended Ground cannot be known or acknowledg'd to be a *real and firm Ground*, till we see it grounds *something*. It's Notion plainly imports a *Relation to the Superstructure*; and you may as well prove a man a *Father* without proving he has a *Child*, as prove any thing to be a *Ground* without proving such and such Points to be *grounded on it*; and this (in our case) with *Absolute Certainty*. Pray, take *that* along with you still, otherwise you turn your back to the Question, and run away from it in the open Field. 'Tis tedious and mortifying beyond measure to hear you still *talking*, and *pretending* you have an *Absolutely Certain Ground* for Faith, and yet never see you,

you, so much as once, endeavouring to shew how it's Ascertaining Virtue affects the Articles you build upon it; and that *this particular Sense of Scripture* in each respective Point has such a close, and necessary Connexion with the Letter on which 'tis built, as to give Absolute Certainty of it to all that are competent Judges of the Sense of Words. Which the Experience of all Ages since Christ confutes, and our own Eyes Witness to be false in the Socinians and others. Thirdly, Your self confess once upon a time that you are absolutely Certain you now hold all the same Doctrin that was taught by Christ and his Apostles; Now, this candid expression would make any honest well-meaning man verily believe that you meant you had been absolutely Certain of every particular Christian Doctrin, by vertue of your Ground or Rule. But your incomparable dexterity quite and clean over-reach't us. For, when you came to explain your self there, it amounted to no more but that your Faith was refer'd into Scripture (that is, that you pretended to Scripture) which contains all; or as you told us p. 17. that you were absolutely certain you hold all, because you hold all, not in your Soul or Mind (where Points of Faith are to be held) but in a kind of Purse as it were; as one is said, when he holds a Book in his hand, to hold all that is in it: being possess'd of which, tho' you cannot come at it's sense (which is little better than if it were lock'd up in a Trunk) you are in possession of all Christian Faith notwithstanding, and hold very firmly (in that Sense) all that was taught by Christ and his Apostles. Fourthly, Hence you have not perform'd what you undertook, viz. to shew that Protestants had any Absolutely Certain Ground of their Faith. For, 'tis not enough to paint out a Book, and cry out aloud *Tis your Ground*, but you must shew, that 'tis indeed such a Ground.

but

I. 2

Now

P. 14.

Now a *Ground* or *Rule* bears in it's notion *Evidence* to those who are to use it, and to know other things by it's Direction; Nay more; *Clear Evidence*. For as all *Certainty* must have some kind of *Evidence* to create it in us, so this Effect of *Absolute Certainty* can have no less than *Clear Evidence* for it's Cause. But, you may as easily prove Mankind has no Eyes to see with, as go about to shew that the Letter of Scripture is thus clear in order to the discovery of right Faith, even in the highest and most concerning Points of our Christian Belief. Fifthly, 'Tis pleasant to observe what a rare Resolution of your Faith you give us p. 24. Our Faith (say you) is *resolv'd into the Scripture as the Word of God, and whatever is built on the Word of God, is absolutely Certain*. You must, indeed, having deserted the Tradition of the Church, either pretend to Scripture, or nothing; unless you will confess your selves to be pure Phanaticks or Pagans: and it looks mighty plausibly to say, that *whatever is built on the Word of God is absolutely Certain*; for 'tis a great Truth. But the only Point is still, Are you *absolutely certain* by your Grounds, that your Faith is *indeed built on the Word of God*? You say, indeed, Scripture is your *Ground*; you pretend to it as your *Ground*; perhaps you think it so too; and, 'tis not about your saying, pretending or thinking it to be such, that we dispute with you: for we should not scruple to grant you all this without any Dispute at all: But does your saying, pretending or thinking *Prove* it to be so really, and indeed? All Heresies in the world do as much as this comes to, and yet are no less Heresies than if they did none of this. 'Tis your *Proving* it to be your *Ground* (and that an *Absolutely Certain* one too) which we would be at; but, we justly complain you flinch from the only thing in Dispute and

and perpetually built on. We tell you once more, (and we cannot repeat it too often) there is a necessary Connection between the *Ground* and the *Building*; for, 'tis not a *Building* if it have no *Ground*, nor the *Ground* of a *Building* if nothing be *built* on it. You are then to shew us Absolute Certainty of this necessary Connection between the *Scripture* and your *Faith*, not you do nothing but talk at randoms. But, alas! You have not the Confidence to make out this, or produce your Reasons to conclude this *Ground* and this *Building* have such a necessary Relation; and I must tell you plainly, *you can never do it*. For, pray, tell me, May not the Socinians, and indeed all Hereticks that ever arose in the Church, say, pretend, and (perhaps) think the same that you do? Nay, do not they all alledge the same? Do not they all profess to resolve their *Faith* (I mean their abominable *Errands*) into the *written Word*? Do not they pretend it for their *Ground*, and that they *build* their prophane *Tenets* on it; & lastly, avow as stoutly as you do for your heart, that *whatever is built on Gods Word, is absolutely Certain*? Will you allow these Pleas Argumentative for them, or, that their wicked *Errours* are therefore, *true Faith* and *Absolutely Certain*, because they *alledge* all this! And can you be so unreasonable as to expect we should pass that for a good Argument, or a conclusive Reason to prove *you have Absolute Certainty* for your *Faith*, which your self disallows, when 'tis alledged for *them*; nay, which *you* must disallow and declare against, unless you will patronize all their Heresies? Pray, lay your hand on your Heart, and consider (I am sure, 'tis more your own Good, than mine, you should) into what a lamentable, or rather Chimerical Condition Gods Church is reduc'd by your Resolution of your *Faith* here, and the Account you give of it. The *Pillar* and *Ground* of

Truth

Truth is reduc'd by you into a confused *Chaos* of incoherent Errors; *Christ's* immaculate *Sponse* is associated with all the Adulterate Synagogues of *Sarban*; lastly, *Faith* as to it's Certainty is in no better a Condition than Heresy, and Heresy is upon even Ground with Faith. I have a better opinion of the Church of England, than to believe Her most learned and genuin Members, will own such a Resolution of her Faith, as will make the Socinians, and all other Hereticks in the World their fellow Christians and Brothers, as they must be forced to do, if they own no other Resolution of it than all those pestilent Sects unanimously profess. I see Mr. G had good reason to ask you in his 5th. Question, *What Churches you accounted Christian Churches?* For, I much fear, by your Discourse and Principles, you exclude *None*: Nor ought you, so they heartily hold the same Ground of Faith with you; for then all their *Unchristian Tenets* are to pass for *Material Errors*, not *Formal Heresies*. They hold all true Faith in the *Purse* still; that they mistake the *coin* and *mettal*; and that's enough, in all conscience, for such a Church as that you are about rearing or dawbing up. You pass a complement indeed upon the four first General Councils, and that you reject all such *Doctrins* as were condemn'd by them; which use to be words of course in your Controversies; as [your humble servant] and such like, are in our common Conversation: but, when you are once got out of the circumstance of pretending to hold to some Antiquity, that so you may set a better face on it, when you oppose the *Papists*; when that job is over, they are but *Fall's*. *His* Congregations, and so perhaps were deceiv'd in all they debn'd against the *Arians*, *Eutychians*, &c. Especially, if one of your *sister Enquirers* comes to fancy otherwise; and, no doubt, there were many such even in those

those days. And, then comes the 21st. Article of *Q. Elizabeth's* Symbol; and knocks them down all at once with a Declaration that their Decrees have neither Strength nor Authority, unless it may be declar'd, that they be taken out of Holy Scripture; and so all is with a turn of ones hand brought back to the same Point again, and, farewell Councils: Your self, and any one of your sober Enquirers, are at full liberty still to judge of them by your Scripture-Rule; and the Resolution of your Faith is establish'd by that Article (at least as you make use of it) to be the same with that which is made, and profess'd by all the vile Hereticks in the world. For, as Dr. *Barnet* sayes very candidly in his *Answer to the Method of converting Protestants*; p. 83. and, no doubt upon your Principles, *If any man, after his strictest Enquiries, is still perswaded that a Council, has decreed against the true meaning of the Scriptures, in a point necessary to Salvation, then he must prefer God to Man, and follow the Sounder tho' it should prove to be the lesser party: And, If any Company or Synod of Protestants have decreed any thing contrary to this, in so far they have departed from the Protestant Principles.*] Where we see he gives every sober Enquirer leave to judge of Councils, even tho' General ones, for he excepts None; and himself shows them the way, by Judging & Censuring the Councils of his own Church.

35. Another scruple yet remains incumbent on you to clear; which is, that, by your putting it upon Mr. G. to prove you have not Absolute Certainty as to the Rule of your Faith, and by your innate Antipathy against *Infallibility*, 'tis very dubious whether your self do indeed hold the Tradition of all Christian Churches *Absolutely Certain*, even for the Scripture; however to save your Credit, you then pretended it, fearing your denying it might discredit Mr. T. Since then you ly under

a shrewd suspicion, that you do not deal really with
 him, and the rest of your Readers, in this sort of Pro-
 fession; it would become you in your Reply, both to
 shew why you allow that Testimony to be *Absolutely*
Certain, and yet are such an Enemy to *Infallibility*;
 since common sense tells us, no man can judge himself
Absolutely Certain of anything, if he judges he may at the
 same time be deceived in it; and, withal, that you may
 give more satisfaction to your Readers herein, than an
 empty and scarce credible acknowledgment of it, when
 you were in untoward Circumstances; pray, go to
 work like a Scholar, and demonstrate to us by way of
 solid Reason, working upon the Nature of the Thing
 (for no Argument *merely probable* will suffice to prove
 a Testimony *Absolutely Certain*.) how, and by what virtue
 this Tradition of all Christian Churches comes to be thus
Absolutely Certain for the Letter of the Scripture; as you
 see we endeavour to demonstrate the *Absolute Certainty* of
 our Tradition for Doctrine. There cannot be a worthi-
 er Point to exert your self in, nor a greater service done
 to your Rule; nor a better way to clear your self to the
 incredulous part of the World, than to perform this:
 for one knows not whence meer Words, and outward
 Professions may proceed; but, solid and convincing
 Reasons can come onely from a Heart possess'd with the
 Truth of what is Profess'd. Go to work then, and bless
 us with the sight of this *truly Learned and Judicious Per-*
formance. And, while your hand is in, please to shew
 us too, that the Absolute Certainty of this Universal
 Testimony reaches to prove your Rule *twice*; that is,
 reaches to prove no part of the Written Word was lost;
 nay, that it reaches to the particular Verses, and the
 most substantial Words in those Verses, as well as to the
 main Books; and lastly, to Translations also and Tran-
 scrip-

scriptions; as you ought to do in case they be (as indeed they are) of *equal* Concern, in our circumstances, as the *Books* themselves. Or, if you deny they are *equally important*; and, maintain that this *Absolute Certainty* may be had of your *Rule*, without the same Certainty for *these*; then please to give us your Reasons for it, and shew how *Faith* can be *Absolutely Certain*, tho' the *Letter* on which it depends, may perhaps have been *maim'd* or *corrupted* by any of these miscarriages. Or, if you think fit to say you have *Absolute Certainty* of your *Faith*, tho' you have not *Absolute Certainty* for it's *Rule*; then, confess candidly and ingenuously your *Faith* is *Absolutely-speaking Uncertain*; and, to make good that rare Christian Tenet, fall to work and confute utterly that *Positive Book* [*Faith Vindicated*] which undertakes to produce a multitude of Demonstrations to prove that *Faith cannot possibly be false*; and, withal, please to inform us to what end you maintain your *Rule* of *Faith* to be *Absolutely Certain*, if it do not make your *Faith thus Certain* too, or what that Certainty serves for. Any thing would content us, so you would once leave fluttering, and hovering in common Words: Either tell us plainly all *Faith* is *Uncertain*, or come at length to some firm bottom, on which we may with *Absolute Certainty* ground the *Truth* of it, and raise it above some plausible *Likelihood*. But, we remonstrate against your putting us off with the Old Sham [*Sufficient Certainty*] unless you particularize to us what kind of Certainty you hold, and make out 'tis sufficient for the *Nature*, the *Ends* and *Uses* of *Faith*, and the Obligations issuing from it, and incumbent on the Professours of it. If you refuse to condescend to these fair Proposals, all the World must think you onely temporiz'd with Mr. T. and the occasion; and that you have not that

K

Zeal

Zeal for your *Rule of Faith* (whose grand Interest 'till these things should be made out) as you pretend. Once more I tell you, that, if all this will not move you to this every way necessary undertaking, I must then plainly challenge you, that it is your necessary and precise Duty, in this very circumstance, as you are a Controversist; and, as I am concern'd with you under that notion, I must demand it of you.

36. I know not well whether it be worth the while to justify Mr. M. for calling your Answer to Mr. G's 5th Question *Trifling*; or whether it be necessary, after so ample a Discovery, that all the rest of them, taking them in the sense you explicated them, deserv'd no better Character. You were ask't onely the meaning of your Words, [*Christian Church*] but you had a mind to be liberal, and give more than was ask't, the meaning of [*Universal Testimony*] too: and to tell us, that, by *Universal Testimony*, you mean *Universal Consent*. That is to say, by *Universal Testimony*, you mean *Universal Testimony*: For, all agree or consent in the Testimony, if it be *Universal*. Then, to the precise Question, you Answer, that, by the *Christian Church*, you mean all *Christian Churches*; which is to say, that, by the *Christian Church*, you mean the *Christian Church*; for *All the Parts* make the *Whole*; so that, instead of an Explication, you give us the same thing over again, and almost in the same Words. And, pray, who's the wiser for such an Answer? Yet, tho' it be impertinent, and nothing to the purpose, 'tis at least *True*, and *Evident by its self*, without needing to make it a *Question*: If you would please to afford us such Evidences, when 'tis to purpose, you would highly oblige us. Certainly, a Considering Reader cannot but think you are very unhappy in explicating your self; for, either your Explications run quite

quite away from your Answer, which you are to explicate, and are a mile wide of them; or they come too close to them, and are the self-same said over again, and almost in the same Words. But, can any one think so excellent a Wit, as Yours, is justly reported, should expose himself so manifestly, without some latent Design? 'Tis incredible. Let us take a view then of Mr. G's 3rd. Question; *Being the Words Christian Church may be taken in several Latitudes by Persons of different Religions, I desire to know what that Christian Church is, &c.* Here we see plainly, that the main of the Question was, what Churches were accounted by You *Christian*, or how that Word [*Christian*] was to be explicated; and, You give him for explication the self-same word again, and in effect tell him, that by *Christian* is meant *Christian*; and thats all he can get from You. And, You did prudently; for, had You come to distinguish which Congregation was *Christian*, which not, You must have secluded all *Hereticks*, which your Principles could not do; for your Ground of Faith here is most manifestly Common to *all* of them; and so You would have lain open to the Disrepute of having and *professing* a Brother-head with all those Excrementitious Out-casts; and your pretended Rule (notwithstanding its other many Divine Excellencies) had appear'd to be utterly unqualifi'd with Clearness and Firmness enough to be call'd a *Rule* or *Ground*. To avoid this, and in Consönancy to your Principles, You take all their Testimonies in for Scripture, and pretend it *strengthens* it. So it may perhaps as to the *Books*: But, You know how the Church complain'd of the Hereticks for corrupting the Letter of *Scripture*, to make it Favourable for them; and, therefore, for any thing *You* know, they cry'd up the *Books*, because they had fitted them for their own purpose.

Whence, tho' the Testimony for the *Books* should be stronger by their *concurrence*, yet the Credit of the Letter, in the respective places that oppose those Hereticks, is *weaker* for their allowing them, because they admitted them as consistent with their Tenets; otherwise, they would have rejected them, as they did *others* upon that score. And, what advantage can you gain by the former towards the proving your Ground of Faith Absolutely Certain, if you be not equally Certain of the later? Surely none at all. For, 'tis not the whole Book in the lump that can be produc'd to prove Faith, or confute Heresy, but *particular Texts*; and, if These and the mainly significant Words in them, be not Absolutely Certain, what becomes of the *Absolute Certainty* of your Rule, or your Faith? Nay, I am not fully satisfied that their *concurrent Testimony* does strengthen the Certainty of even so much as the *Books*. For, I observe that our Judges suspect the Testimony of honest men, and mis-doubt the justness of the Cause, if known Knights of the Post are call'd in to *corroborate* their Evidence. But, you have prudent Maxims of your own which are beyond the reach of Lawyers.

37. You endeavour to come a little closer to the Point p. 29. and set *your self* to prove that Scripture is your Rule of Faith; ay, that it is: In order to which, You advance this Proposition, *that Certainly all that believe it to be the Word of GOD, must take it for a Rule of Faith*. These two confident Words, [Certainly] and [Must] are very efficacious to perswade those who will take it upon your Word; nay they are so magisterial, that they impose a kind of necessity upon them of believing all *is* as you say, or else of denying your Authority; which would break Friendship. But, if they will not, but happen to be so uncivil as to require *Proofs* for

for it, they quite lose their force; and, which is worse, such positive Assertions make People expect very *strong* Arguments to Answer and make good such confident Affirmations; else it hazards Credit, to pretend Great Things and bring little or no *Proof*. How you will justify those big Words, we shall see shortly. In the mean time let us ask you, how you come to be thus *Certain* of it? Is there no more requisit to a *Rule*, but to be the *Word of God*? Or, did you never read in *Error non-plust*, long ago, p. 73, 74, 75. the Answer now given You to this Pretence, in the Confutation of your 12th. Principle; in which You endeavour to establish Scripture to be a *Rule*? Or, can You so much forget your self, and your duty to reply to it, as to discourse still thus crudely, with the same confidence as if You had never read or heard of such a Book, or any thing alledg'd there to the contrary? If we must needs mind You of it so often, take these few words along with you now at least; and till you have reply'd to them, and others such which are there alledg'd, I beseech you let us be tir'd no more with such Talk, as serves onely to amuse, but can never edify or convince. [*To be writ by men divinely inspir'd*, Error Non-plust, P. 74. *to be Divine, Infallible; and the Word of God, signifies* no more but that they (the Scriptures) are perfectly Holy and True in themselves, and beneficial to Mankind in some way or other; and, this, is the farthest these Words will carry: But, that they are of themselves of sufficient Clearness to give sincerely-endeavouring Persons such security of their Faith while they rely on them as cannot consist with Error (which is requisit to the Rule of Faith) these Words signify not. They may be most Holy, they may be most True in themselves, they may be exceedingly Useful, or Beneficial to Mankind, and yet not endow'd with this Property; which yet the Rule of Faith must have.]

have.] And, pag. 75. [What then Dr. St. is to do, is to produce *conclusive Reasons to evince that the Letter of Scripture has such a Perspicuity, and other Perfections belonging to such a Rule, as must Ground that most Firm, and Unalterable, and (if rightly Grounded) Inerrable Assent call'd Christian Faith.*] We see here the Question rightly stated, and the Point that sticks; now let's see whether your Proof does so much as touch it, or in the least mention it.

38. The Argument you make choice of, (I suppose it is your *best*, the matter in hand being of highest consequence) to prove that all who *believe Scripture to be the Word of God must take it for a Rule of Faith*, is this. [For, *since the reason of our believing is because God has reveal'd, whatever God has reveal'd must be believ'd, and a Book containing in it such Divine Revelations must be the Rule of our Faith. i. e. by it we are to judge what we are bound to believe as Divine Revelations.*] What a wild medly is here, instead of a Reason! Here are four Propositions involv'd. The First, is this; *the reason of our believing is because God has reveal'd*; and this is granted: onely you may note that we are *equally bound to believe what God has reveal'd by the Church's Testimony as by Writing, if it be equally clear it was thus reveal'd*; nay, more by the former than by the later, in case *that way of ascertaining the Divine Revelation be more clear than this*: nor does your First Proposition deny this, but rather asserts it. The Second, This, [*whatever God has reveal'd must be believ'd*]. And this is pretended for an Inference, but alas, 'tis nothing less. For, how does it follow that because the reason of our believing is God's Revealing, therefore we are bound to believe what God has reveal'd, *whether we know it or no*? All then that can be said

said of it is, that 'tis pious Non-sense, unless you add to it that we have also *Certain Grounds* God *has indeed* reveal'd it : For, otherwise, besides the danger of *erring* our selves in matters of the highest moment (and this *unalterably* too, in regard we entertain that Error as recommended by the Divine Revelation) we shall moreover hazard to entitle God's Infinite veracity to a Falsehood, and make *Truth* it self the Author of *Lies*. The Third, that [*a Book, containing in it such Revelations must be the Rule of our Faith*] is absolutely deny'd. For a Book may *contain* in it Divine Revelations, and I may not know certainly it does contain them : Or, I may *know* certainly by very good Testimony it *does contain* them, yet not know certainly it does contain them *all* : Or, I may know it does contain them *all*, yet perhaps not be able to know any *one* of those Divine Revelations in particular, which are *contain'd* there ; for example, if it be in a language I understand not : Or, tho' I do understand the language, yet by reason of it's mysterious Sublimity, and deep Sense, and thence Obscurity and Ambiguity in many passages relating to spiritual matters, and the Chief Articles of our Christian Profession, I cannot be assur'd with Absolute Certainty *which is the right Sense* of it ; and therefore (considering me as in the way to Faith, & that my Assent depends necessarily on the Truth of some Preliminary which is the object of pure Reason) I *might* not, nay *cannot*, with any true Reason, *firmlly assent* to what I see may be an Error ; nor hazard my salvation upon an *Uncertain* Ground, and on which I know great multitudes have already Ship-wrackt. The Fourth [*By it we are to judge what we are bound to believe as Divine Revelations*] runs upon the same strain ; for you are to shew us how *by it* I am to judge my self

self bound to believe *any thing at all* as a Divine Revelation, that is, as taught by *Christ*, with a *Firm and Unalterable Assent*, (such as *Faith* is) till I am *Certain* it is so, by being ascertain'd *be* taught it. This is the *True*, This is the Main Point; which you slide over still as smoothly as a non-plust Commentator does over hard Texts, that puzzle him to explicate. I say once more, 'tis the *Main* if not *onely* Point: for, till you have made out this, you can never prove that Scripture (taken alone) is a *Ground of Faith at all*, much less an *Absolutely Certain* Ground; and, least of all, *your* Ground in particular. And therefore you said very True when you lamented p. 28. you were *in a hard case*: for tho' (say you) *there is an Absolute Certainty, and this Certainty lies in Universal Tradition, and we can shew this Universal Tradition, yet we cannot shew the Ground of our Certainty*. For, you cannot shew Universal Tradition for every particular Text that concerns Faith without *our* Tradition-*Rule for Doctrin*; nor Absolute Certainty you have the true *Sense*, tho' you had *that Certainty* for the *Letter*, without which 'tis not *your* Ground at all. A Certainty there is, but not by vertue of *your* Grounds, and so 'tis none of *your* Certainty, nor *your* Ground neither. Whereas then you confess here that, *if you cannot shew the true Ground of your Certainty you deserve to be either pity'd or begg'd*, you say very true: for we do from our hearts pity you, let who will take the tother part. We pity you to see such excellent Wits, who, had they a good cause, would be honourably victorious, forc't by the Patronage of a bad one to employ their Talents in shifting about for by-paths to avoid meeting the Question in the face. We pity you for your being necessitated to impose upon your well-meaning Readers with your
specious

want of this Absolute Certainty, which you pretend to; 'Tis this I say, which is the true Subject of our present Debate. For tho' we both held the same *Quantity* or *Number* of Points to a tittle, yet it might be *Faith* in one of us, and but *Opinion* in the other; nay perhaps *Opinion* in both, if both of us wanted Certain Grounds to evince they were *Christs* Doctrin, which is the Formal Motive of our Faith. It belongs then to a *Rule* to ascertain both the *That* we are to believe, and the *What*; but the former Office of it is Antecedent and *Principal*, the later Collateral, and Secondary; Common Sense telling us that we ought first to determin whether there is any *Faith* at all, ere we come to debate *what Points* are of *Faith*, what *not*. These Fast-and-Loose Doings make me, when ever I meet with an *Id est*, still expect it means [*aliud est*] and that, like your other Explications of your self, it is brought in to divert our Eyes to another Object instead of keeping them still fixt upon the same.

40. Enough has been said, I am sure too much ever to be Answer'd, to prove that Scripture alone as interpreted by any Private Mans Judgment, wants the Chief Property of a *Rule of Faith*, viz. such a *Clearness* as is able to give all sorts of People, or the Generality of Christians (be they never so Sober Enquirers) Absolute Assurance of it's Sense, even in the highest Mysteries of our Faith, *without needing the Church's Help*. Nor, will You ever be able to produce the Consent of all Christian Churches affirming that it has this Property. Wherefore, when it is call'd a *Rule* by some of the Antients, it must be taken (as Mr. M. *says) with the Interpretation of the Church adjoyn'd; which, having the Living Sense of Christ's Law in her Heart, can animate the Dead Letter, and preserve it from Explications any

*Dr. S. Second Letter, p. 29.

any way prejudicial to the Faith received. And, *this* indeed, it may be call'd a Rule of Faith; because, as 'tis thus understood, it cannot lead any into Error, but, *is of good use to abett Truth by it's Divine Authority. In which sense Councils proceed upon it often, and sometimes call it a Rule. And, I remember the Famous *Lanney*, when we were Discourſing once about Tradition ſhew'd me a little Book of his, in which, he goes about to prove, that Councils had frequently defin'd againſt Hereticks out of Scripture. On which occaſion I ask't him, if he judg'd thoſe Councils fram'd their Definitions by the ſenſe they had of the Letter by their own human Skill; or by the ſenſe of the Church, which they had by Tradition: he answer'd, *undoubtedly by the later*; and that there would be no End of Diſputing with Hereticks, had they taken the former Way. By which we may diſcern that ſtill *Tradition* was in proper ſpeech *their Rule*, even when they alledg'd Scripture. Other, call Scripture ſometimes a *Rule*, because it contains Faith; in which ſenſe even ſome Catholicks call it a *partial Rule* because *Part* of Chriſt's Doctrin is contain'd in it, the other part deſcending by Tradition: which acceptation of the Word [*Rule*] is yet leſs Proper; because (as has been prov'd) it may be contain'd there, and yet we be never the neerer knowing our Faith merely by virtue of Scripture's containing it. But no Catholick ever ſaid that *every ſober Enquirer may find out all neceſſary Points of Faith in Scripture without the Churches Help*. A Doctrin, which You declare p. 211. You are far from being aſham'd of. And yet, let me tell You Sir, You will never find this Poſition of yours as it lies [*without the Churches Help*:] in the Univerſal Tradition of all Chriſtian Churches; and, unleſs You find this, You will never prove they held it a *Rule* in

*See Sect. 23.

the genuin and proper signification in which we take that Word; (and tho' they shou'd call it a *Rule*, in either of the former Senses lately mention'd, they impugn not us at all, who grant the same.

41. You will needs run out of the way, p. 30. to talk of a *Judge of Controversies*; but the best is, You acknowledge you do go thus astray, by acknowledging 'tis another distinct Controversy; and yet, tho' you acknowledge this, You still run on with it, that is, You still wander from the Point. You triumph mightily p. 31. that it is impossible for us to bring such an unanimous Consent of all Christian Churches for our Infallible Judge—or our Infallibility, as Protestants bring for their Rule. As for the later, where were your thoughts, Sir, while you thus bad adieu to the plainest Rules of Discourse? Cannot we go about to demonstrate the Infallibility of a Human Testimony by Natural Mediums, but, in stead of Answering it, you must object against our Conclusion, and bid us bring the Consent of all Churches to abett that, which neither depends, nor is pretended to depend, on Authority, but on meer Reason? Cannot one say two and three make five, but he must be presently bobb'd in the mouth that he cannot shew the Consent of all Christian Churches for it; and that, unless he does this, let it be never so evident, 'tis not True? 'Tis very pleasant to reflect how brisk you are still with this *Consent of all Churches*; (I suppose because 'tis a Topick very seldom heard of in your Controversies) tho' as has been shewn over and over, 'tis not a jot to your purpose, nor avails any thing to the evincing you have an Absolutely - Certain Ground of your Faith. And, if we have an *Infallible Rule*, or such a Rule as permits not those to be deceiv'd that follow it, can there be any thing more Rational than to hold by
 conse-

consequence, that there is an *Infallible Judge*; or that our Church can judge unerringly in matters belonging to Faith? the word *Judge* onely signifying that that Person or Persons, are in *Authority*, or are *Authoritative Deciders*, to preserve the Integrity of Faith, and the Peace of the Church. So that, supposing Church-Governours or Bishops, and that those Sacred Concerns are to be provided for, plain *Reason* demonstrates to us this too as well as the other, without *needing the Consent of all Christian Churches*; tho' you need not to be told this does not want neither; unless you think that all the General Councils that defin'd against Hereticks, imagin'd they might perhaps be in an Error all the while; and the Heretick, whom they condemn'd, in the right. Your **Appeal to all the Churches of the Christian World for your Rule*, has a plausible appearance, but vanishes into air when one comes to grasp it. How often must it be repeated that you have as yet produc't *no Rule at all for your Faith*? For you have neither prov'd that Scripture's *Letter*, as to every substantial word that concerns Faith, is *absolutely-Certain*; nor that it has in it the nature of a *Rule*; nor that, 'tis your Rule, more than 'tis to all the Hereticks in the world; nor that your *Assent to any Point upon that Rule*, as made use of by you, (for want of Connexion between the *Points* to be believ'd, and the *Rule* on which they are believ'd,) can have the nature of *true Faith* in it. If talking big would do the deed, you would indeed do wonders; but let your Reasons be proportionable; otherwise, *strong words* and *faint blows* are but very ill-matched. Now, I must declare plainly I cannot see the least semblance of so much as one *solid Proof* in this whole Treatise of yours. If there be, confute me by shewing it, and maintaining it to be *such*. You explain
your

* p. 34

you own Tenet over and over till one is weary of reading it, and half ashamed so often to answer it. You talk much of *God's Word*; that we are bound to believe it, that it contains *God's Will*, and all things necessary to *Salvation*; and, twenty such fine things; which bear a *Godly Sound*, and would do well in a *Sermon* where all goes down glib, there being none to contradict you; but, are very dull and flat in *Controversy*. On the contrary, not one Argument have you even offer'd at, to prove you have *Absolute Certainty of the Rule or Ground of your Faith*, but have faln short in every one of those Considerations; both as to the Notions of *Certainty, Ground, Rule, Faith*; and that 'tis your *Ground, your Rule, and your Faith*.

42. A Rule to any thing, if we take that word in a proper sense as we do in our modern Controversies, is the *Immediate Light* to direct us in order to our knowing that thing. For, in case it be not Immediate, but some other thing intervenes that is needful to direct us, and by whose Rectitude we frame our thoughts as to that affair, and that it renders the *other* capable to direct us; that *other* becomes presently the *Thing Ruled*, and not the *Rule*: in regard it wanted the Rectitude of another thing to direct it, that so it might be fit to direct us. Wherefore the *Interpretation* of Scripture being more *Immediate* to the knowing the *Sense* of it's Words, (that is to the knowing our *Faith*) than is the *Letter*, for it is manifest that all who have the *Letter* have not right *Faith* unless they make a right *Interpretation* of it; hence Mr. M. had reason to object, that *The Christian Church did not agree that every man is to interpret Scripture for himself*, or to build his Faith upon his own private Interpretation of it; Nor ought you to be offended at his position, in regard you told

us before p. 70 & 8. a *Hieratical Sense* may by under these *General Words* [*Christ is the Son of God*] and different *Senses* may be coueh'd under these, *Christ is really in the Eucharist*; and so, (even according to your self) 'tis the *Interpretation* or the assigning the *Sense* to those words which makes *True Faith* or *Heresy*. Wherefore, 'tis plain that your own *Interpretation* of Scripture is, in true speech, your *Rule*; for That is a more *Immediate* Direction to give you the *Sense* of Scripture than is the *Letter*; which is Antecedent, and presuppos'd to the *Interpretation*, as it's *Matter* or *Object*. Nor had you your *Faith* tho' you had the *Letter*, till you had *interpreted it*. And, besides, the proper and *Immediate* Effect of *Interpretation*, is to give the *Sense of Words*, and 'tis the *Sense* of Scripture which is your *Faith*, and so your own *Private Interpretation* is unavoidably your *Rule*. If then you will vouch, as you do all over, that the *Universal Consent* of all Christian Churches gave you your *Rule*, it must attest your way of interpreting Scripture too, by private judgments; Nay, it must moreover attest that way to be *absolutely Certain*; otherwise you can never shew how your kind of Protestant Faith, no better grounded, can be *absolutely Certain*; and this, as to all the *Doctrine* that was taught by *Christ* and his *Apostles*; for both which you very unadvisedly undertook when you were at a pinch; hoping, I suppose, to shift it off again with one of your *transferring* Expedients, or some squinting [*Id est*]. To what purpose is it then to tell us here p. 31. how a man (one of your *Sober Enquirers* I suppose) is to behave himself, where the *Texts* or *places* are *doubtful*. For, unless the *Consent* of all Christian Churches bring us down by their *Universal Testimony* that those methods are to be taken, and that they are *absolutely Certain* Means for all that use

use them to *interpret* Scripture *right*, or come at the *true Sense* of it, you are still as incapable as ever of shewing us *absolute Certainty* for your Faith, or that you have any Faith at all by those Means. Nay, I much mistake you, if your Principles will allow these Means, no not even the Testimony which brings down to us *the Sense of the Primitive Church* (upon which you here pass a complement) to be more than *Fallible*. If you do, you admit our Rule: If you do not, I would advise you to prepare your Reasons to convince the World how a *Fallible Authority* can prove that what is built on it is *absolutely Certain*. However, you set the best Colour upon these Fallible Means you can; telling us, your *Sober Enquirer* is to make use of the *best helps, the best and most reasonable means, &c.* tho' they are such that in likelihood it will take up his whole life time, ere he can use and peruse them all, so as to compass sincerely this satisfaction; nay 'tis ten to one he will *dy* a *Seeker*: and then he will have *enquir'd* very *soberly*, to go to the next world to ask the way to heaven. I wonder how many of the Church of *England*, or even of *Geneva*, made use of all these Means ere they finally pitch'd upon their Faith: I much doubt—*Vel duo, vel nemo*—Few or none. And we would know of you whether any of those means, or all together, are *absolutely Certain*. If none, you are still where you were. If you say any or all, you will fight against Experience; for many who use all these Means do notwithstanding differ. You would insinuate by the words, [*doubtful places*] that the Points your Sober Enquirers doubt of, are but unnecessary, sleight, or disputable; but alas! they are the highest Mysteries of our Christian Faith; and if they must take such pains, as to compare Scripture and Expositors, and the Sense of the Primitive

tive Church (which will require perusing attentively a pretty Library) ere they can accept these for Points of Faith, what satisfaction is to be expected in *all that Christ and his Apostles taught*, by your Rule, which asks such laborious study to understand it's Sense in *these*; or by your method, which is both *Endless*, & when all is done *Uncertain*.

43. Of how different a Judgment the Primitive Church was, let a Chief Pillar of it, St. *Athanasius* inform us (*Lib. de Synodis Arimini & Seleucia*) where he blames some Clergy-men of his time for going about enquiring what they were to believe, in these words, *Si credidissent, nunquam, quasi Fidem non haberent, de Fide quaesivissent. — Sese Infideles esse declaraverunt, cum id quaerant quod non habent.* If they had believ'd, they had never enquir'd, as if they did want Faith. — They have declar'd themselves to be Unbelievers by their enquiring after what they have not. So, that, it seems all your Sober Enquirers are (according to this Fathers Judgment) *Infidels*, or *Unbelievers*. Observe here the vast distance between your Principles and those of this Holy Father and most learned Controvertist. Nothing but *seeking and enquiry* (with the Epithet of *sober* to grace it a little) will serve your turn; but, he tells us, on the quite contrary, that, if *Wee seek*, or *enquire*, we have *no Faith at all*: Which, in plain English, signifies thus much; you judge *that* to be the *only* way to Faith, which, he judges a plain Argument of having *none*. You are all for *seeking* for your Faith in Scripture; He, for taking what is *already found* to our hand some other Way, wch. must be by *Tradition*. One thing I should much wonder at, did not I know your private-spirited Principles; 'tis this, why amongst other means you assign for your *sober Enquirer* to make use of, you do not put the *Judgment of the Present Church* (let it be your own if you

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please)

please, for *me*. I should think the Faith of the Church
 had more weight in it, than all the rest put together, if
 you do indeed hold it a True Church; and 'tis far more
 easy to know its sense, where in has thought fit to expli-
 cate it's self clearly. The finding the sense of *Communi-
 cations*, and the *Places compar'd*, and of *Primitive Anti-
 quity*, costs infinite trouble; whereas, there is no diffi-
 culty, to know the sense of the Present Church, speaking
 to you by Living Voice, and constant Practice. I
 should think too, 'tis most agreeable to the Order of the
 World, the Unity of the Church, and the Maxims of
 Government (if you will allow any such to a Church) that
 People should follow the Doctrine of their Teachers,
 be led by their Pastours, and obey their Superiours,
 rather than be left to their own private Fancies, in mat-
 ters of such Concern, that, if they clash with them in
 their Judgment, it hazards to break all those sacred Or-
 ders, by which the World subsists. Let me ask you one
 thing, ere we leave this Point. Is your *sober Enquirer*
 Bound to use these means for his satisfaction in *doubtful*
 Points, or not? You say expressly here, that he is bound
 to do this; and, so I suppose you will be dissatisf'd with
 him, if he falls short of this Duty. I ask next, did Mr.
 T. use all these means in a *doubtful* Point, to compass a
 rational satisfaction? How should he, when he was sa-
 tisf'd, and *confirm'd*, and *resolv'd* in so little time. Yet,
 for all your contrary Doctrine here, you are well satisfi-
 d with him, nay, you undertake p. 13. to satisfy the
 World, that Mr. T. had sufficient Grounds for what he then
 said; which was, that, he was much more confirm'd in the
 Communion of our (the Protestant) Church, and resolv'd
 to continue in it. Pray, Sir, was he a *sober Enquirer*
 or no? If he was, did he in two hours time, that Mr.
 G. and you were Disputing, use the means you say your
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Sober Enquirer is bound to make use of in doubtful cases; as his was, if he dealt sincerely with Mr. G. and did not play booty? Did he in two or three hours time, pray, meditate, compare Scripture, and Expositours upon it, use the help of spiritual Guides, & the sense of the Primitive Church, which, are but *some* of the Means you prescribe p. 31. He made prodigious haste, if he did use those means: How comes he then to be so *hastid*, nay, so *resolv'd*, without using those means; and so worthy of your Patronage, if he did not what you say here, he was bound to do? These are Mysteries, which must be veil'd from the eyes of the Vulgar, & Prophane. Nor is there any way to reconcile these Contradictions, but to understand you with this *Clavis*; that, you say any thing that seems to serve your turn, when you are disputing against us, and *disclaim* it again when the circumstance is alter'd; and that, as you pretended, *that* for your *Rule of Faith*, which not one in a thousand follow; so you pretend those methods must be taken, to understand your Rule right to the end we may not be deceiv'd by it, which, neither are taken by any, nay, need not be taken at all, tho' you told us here men were bound to take them: the believing your word that your Answer was competent (*which was indeed none) acquitted his Obligation, and atton'd for his rashness. This, this alone, was so meritorious, that, it was equivalent to Prayer, Meditation, comparing Scripture, and Expositours upon it, the help of spiritual Guides, and the sense of the Primitive Church, which, you declare here, such as he were bound to consult for their satisfaction in Faith. By which I guess your Test to distinguish a Sober from a Rash Enquirer, is, whether he will rely on your Word or Skill for his security of Heaven. If he will, he is of your sober sort without more ado; and, need not trouble himself with those pain-

* See the Answer to Dr. St's First Letter, Sect. 12. 18, 30.

full Methods : If he *will not*, he must go through them all, or be *Rash*. The Truth is, you play sure ; and may safely defy any man living ever to *enquire* himself soberly out of your Communion : For, whoever begins, shall be sure to dy before he have *enquir'd* half way.

44. At length, to my great Comfort (for 'tis tedious to find no Reasons to speak to, but still to be employ'd in confuting Mistakes) I am come to the last Task, that, as far as I can discern, will belong to my Province. Towards the end of *pag. 31.* your Discourse aymes to establish your kind of *Judgment of Discretion* ; which makes such a noise in your Books, and of late rings out of the Pulpit too. You make way to it thus, *If we have the Consent of all Christian Churches against the onely pretended Infallible Judge, we have their Consent likewise that every man is to judge for his own Salvation.* Your Argument, such as it is, stands thus, *By the Consent of all Christian Churches, there is no Infallible Judge, therefore, every man must judge for himself.* It seems then nothing will content you now but *Infallibility* ; and, if that be not to be had, every one may set up for himself in the *Judging* Profession. Why, suppose the Governours of Our Church, when you left Her, or of your Own Church either, were *Fallible* ; are you grown so nice on a sudden, and your Conscience so tender in embracing any thing less than Infallibly-Certain, for Faith, that *Fallibility* will not serve your turn, which hitherto, you so contentedly hugg'd and adord, and so wittily derided any Certainty above it ? Suppose they had but your *Sufficient Certainty*, or *great Likelyhoods*, *fair Probabilities*, or such like, for their Interpretations of Scripture ; must they therefore lose their Power of *Judging* in that particular, because they are Bishops ? Or, forfeit the Dignity of *Pastours* and Leaders, because they are not *Infal-*
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See Mr. Kid-
der's famous
Sermon
Preach'd at
St. Paul's
Cross, Feb. 23.
1686.

ble You have such an aking tooth at the *Churches* intermeddling in Faith-matters, no not so much as to help her Children in the most necessary Points (p. 21.) so they be *doubtful*, that neither profess't *Infallibility* nor acknowledg'd Fallibility will put you in good humour with *Church-Governours*; but out they must, and your *sober Enquirer* starts up in their stead. For he must judge whether they tell him right or no, when all's done; I suppose by the light Scripture gives him, as he is to judge of the veracity of General Councils; and so we are got into the giddy whirl-pool of a *Circle*. He must learn the Sense of Scripture *by them*, and yet trust *himself* interpreting Scripture, not *them*, for the Sense of it? 'Tis pitty but he had a blew Apron on, and a Tub to hold forth in what heavenly light he had gain'd, by interpreting Scripture after the Method you have shewn him. 'Tis true, if there were no Absolute Certainty in the way to Faith (and I believe you hold none in your Church) every man must shift for himself as well as he may; yet still even in that case, he is *bound* to do that which shall appear *best*, and come up as *neer* to Certainty as he *can*. And can he in any reason think his *own* Enquiry will bring him to more Certainty, than the Pastors of his Church, who had been *sober Enquirers* too themselves, and understood the Means you assign to make that Enquiry, perhaps a thousand times better than himself? If he thinks them *better qualify'd* than himself for interpreting Scripture, he sins against the Light of Reason, not to trust them *rather* than *himself*; For they have, in that Supposition, more knowledge than he; 'Tis left then, that he is to judge *himself* to be better *qualify'd* than his Church, her Bishops and all his Pastors are for that work: and, upon this brisk self-conceit, the Book of Scripture flies open on a sudden,

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discloses it's *Sense*, and discovers to him his *Faith*. Certainly, such a man is likely to have a very Reverend esteem of his Church, her Bishops and Pastors; and yet, your Principles would have all men *such*. Indeed, you would have your sober Enquirers; *pray* and *meditate*. But, it should seem they are to *pray*, amongst other things, God would give them the *Grace* not to obey or believe their Pastors so much as themselves in *necessary* Points; (I hope you hold the Tenet of a Trinity, Christ's God-head, and such other Points, *such*) which otherwise their honest Natural Reason, conscious to it self of it's own Ignorance, will very much *tempt* them to do; and to *meditate* on God's great Mercy, in giving them greater Abilities and better Assistance than he does to his Church; for they are very ungrateful if they *forget* so signal and extravagant a Favour. But, let us see what is to be meant by an *Infallible Judge*, for you do not particularize your acception of those words; nor let your Reader see *what* Judge, *how*, or *for what reason* we hold him *Infallible*.

45. If you mean by [*Judge*] an Authoritative Decider of Controversies about Faith (as was said above) and that (which is what we hold) his verdict is *Infallible* by proceeding upon an *Infallible Rule*, you must either pretend the Christian Church never permitted Church-Governours to exercise their Authority in *deciding* matters of Faith; or else that it never held they had an *Infallible Rule* to go by. And I believe your utmost attempts will fall so far short of producing any such Consent of Universal Tradition for either, that it will be directly against you in both; and you must have a strange opinion of the Decrees of General Councils, in such cases, if you apprehend they held either of those self-condemning Tenets. And yet I cannot tell, but

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I have made my self too large a Promise concerning this Universal Consent of all Christian Churches being for us or not against us in this particular: For I remember now, that, when you were to state the Notion of *Tradition*, you took in the Consent of all former Hereticks to make your Tradition for Scripture larger and firmer than ours is against you, *and to make your Argument stronger by their concurrent Testimony*; and I see a glimmering light already, which will grow very clear ere long, you take in the same infamous Gang to bear witness against our Infallibility; And what a case is the Catholick Church in then? We can never expect those obstinate Revolters from that Church or those Churches which were then in Communion with Rome, will ever acknowledge the Governours had a just Authority to declare against them as Hereticks (for they were all of them, to a man, true-blew *Sober Enquirers*) or that these Governours proceeded upon an *Infallible Rule*: for this were to cut their own throats, and acknowledge themselves Hereticks; a mortification not to be submitted to by much contumacious spirits. Now all these by your Principles are to be accounted *Christian Churches*, and are call'd so very currently, and very frequently by you (p. 24. 25. 26. and in many other places) without any distinction at all. And so we are reduc'd to a very pretty condition, according to the admirable mould in which you have new-cast the Church. For, unless all those Hereticks of old; any *Lutherans, Calvinists*, and all the inferiour Subdivisions of Faith Reformers, vouchsafe to give their *concurrent Testimony* to the Infallibility of the Roman Catholick Church (which condemn'd them all; and, as appears by the Council of Trent throughout, by the same *Rule of Tradition*) she is to have no Infallibility at all allow'd her; her old Rule too

*Dr. St's First Letter, p. 7.

*Dr. St. second Letter, p. 25.

is condemn'd by them for a *False Light*, because it condemn'd them, and their *New-Light*; nor consequently can she be an *Infallible Judge* in Faith-Controversies. This is a very hard Law; Yet your severe Discourses allow us no better quarter. You alledge that *the Eastern Churches utterly deny the Roman Church's Infallibility, tho' they be of very different denominations*. You mean (I suppose) amongst the rest, the *Nestorians, Eutychians*, and such kind of good folks. And can you without blushing avail your self of such *concurrent Testimonies* against the Body communicating with the Roman, and her *Infallible Rule*, whose Ancestors were condemn'd by that very Body to which the present Roman-Catholick Church uninterruptedly succeeds; and were cast out of the Church for receding from the Christian Doctrine, held even then upon that very Rule?

46. But what have we to do with any of your pretended *Christian Churches*, whether *Eastern*, or *not-Eastern*, Modern, or Antient; many or few? Or, what have you to do with them either, if you would, as becomes a Controvertist, speak home to us. You know already we place the *Infallibility* of our Church in delivering, defining and *Judging* of Faith-Controversies, in the *Absolutely Certain Rule of Tradition*. All therefore that have adher'd to Tradition as their Rule, must allow to Her this *Inerrableness*, while she adheres to it, else they must condemn themselves. And those pretended Churches which have *deserted* Tradition, can never, for many reasons, be of any competent Authority against the Roman-Catholick. For, having *no Certain Rule*, they can have *no sure Ground* of what they believe or alledge against her: And, besides, being her Enemies, and condemn'd by her, and that by virtue of this

this very Rule they carp at, common Equity tells every man 'tis not a pin matter what such men say of that Rule, or that Church either, whether those men live East, West, North, or South. I perceive by your far-stretcht words here p. 31. [*All the Churches of the Christian World, All the Eastern Churches tho' of very different denominations*, that you imagin the force of an Authority depends meerly on the *Number* of the Witnesses; whereas we make account it depends much more on their *Weight*; that is, on their *Knowledge*, and on their *Sincerity*, or Indifferency of their Wills, as to the Person or Affair concerning which they are to witness: And Fallible Congregations, which are both Out-casts, and Enemies, have for each of those regards, *no weight* at all.

47. You have another Fetch yet left to prejudice the Reader against our Tenet. For, you often make mention of our *Infallibility*, the *Roman*, or the *Roman Churches Infallibility*, and (as appears p. 15. and 16) of the *Infallibility* of the *Particular Church* of Rome; whereas the Question, and our true Tenet, is, of those many particular Churches communicating with the Roman; so that you seem desirous to convince us you are resolv'd never to speak to any point sincerely or represent it ingenuously. For this sleight, tho' it seems trivial, insinuates into your Readers, that we hold the very Spot of *Rome* is the precise, and adequate *mold* in which *Infallibility* is *cast*. Please then to remember, and pray let it be the last time we tell you of it, that it is her following the *self-evidently certain Rule of Tradition, in which as a Controvertist I do, in this Dispute, place her *Infallibility*. That, being thus absolutely Certain of her Faith, we can prove she is qualify'd to be an *Infallible Judge* of Faith. That every Bishop is a *Judge*

*See First Letter p. 18.

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of Faith-Controversies in proportion to his Sphere, and the Highest Bishop above them all: but still, the last resort or Test of their final obliging to *Belief* (for any one may oblige his Diocesans to *Silence* for Peace's sake) is with reference to the *Body of the Church*; and the Infallibility of the *Church* is refunded into the Certainty of her *Rule*; and there it rests. Hence, conscious to your selves of the want of such an *Infallible Rule*, you dare pretend to no *Infallible Judge*, but are forc't to leave every particular man to his private *Judgment of Discretion*; tho' you experience it shatters your Church, no better principled, into thousands of Sects. In a word, *in the way of our Controversy*, all Discourse ought to begin Originally, and end Finally in an *absolutely Certain Rule of Faith*; that is, in such a Rule as influences our *Tenets* with the same Certainty. We are sure we have such a *Rule*, and, so, we are sure we have *true Faith*; and we are sure you can have no Certainty that You have true *Faith*, because *true Faith* requires *Absolute Certainty*, and, therefore, an *Infallible Rule*, which you renounce. This is the main Point between us, on which depends all the rest, whether it relates to an *Infallible Church* or *Infallible Judge*. Look it then in the face; spare it not, but level your whole quiver of Reasons at this mark. Unless you do this, you do but trifle; you beat the bush, and scatter leaves, but spring nothing. While this *Infallible Rule* remains uncountured, you must confess there may, and ought to be an *Infallible Judge*; and your *Judgment of Discretion* is convinced to be a meer Libertinage, forcibly granted to all, for want of Principles in your selves to Ground them certainly in their Faith, keep them steady in it, and reduce them to it when they deviate.

48. To come closer, and take a more distinct view of this

this *Judgment of Discretion*, I will acquaint you how far and in what I allow it; how far and in what I reject it. I grant that *every man* ~~to~~ *to judge for his own salvation*, and to endeavour by his Reason to find the Way to right Faith. I grant with you that *all Mankind agrees in it*; and therefore wonder at your self-contradiction to make us disagree to it, who certainly are *some part of Mankind*. I grant that, otherwise, 'tis to no purpose to go about to make Converts: I add, nor for you, and me, to write Controversies. I grant that *every man is to judge of the best way to Salvation, and of all the Controversies between us and you; and especially of the true Grounds of Faith*; and to be well satisfy'd who proceeds on a Certain Rule, who not; and that the contrary Tenet is as *ridiculous* as what's most, unless your putting upon us, against your daily experience, such a sottishness as to hold it. I add, that, since every man is to judge of his Grounds, therefore the Rule of Faith must be such as needs not much Learning and Reading, *but must ly level to every man's Natural Light of Understanding; as the nature of Testifying Authority, and it's Certainty does. I will grant you moreover, that to deprive Mankind of this Priviledge of *judging* thus, is to debarr him of the Light and Use of his Reason, when 'tis most needful for him; that is, when it should direct him how to find out the way to his Eternal Happiness, and, avoid the paths that lead him to Eternal Misery. But, I utterly deny, that therefore, he ought to think it *Discretion* to hammer-out his Faith by the dints of his private and unelevated Reason, from Words that are of so deep, and mysterious a *sense*; and this, after he has experienced that multitudes of other men, as *wise* or *wiser* than himself, and (for ought he can discern) very *sincere* too, do their best to understand them right; and yet, as appears by their contradicting

*Se Faith vind.
p. 132, 133,
134, 135.

one another in matters of highest importance, one of those Great, and Learned Parties, does *erre* most dangerously; I deny that his *Discretion* can lead him to *judge* that God's Providence has left no *absolutely Certain* Way to Faith, it being of so vast a Concern, and highest necessity: Or that it can command him to *Assent firmly* and *unalterably* to any Tenet as a *Truth*, nay, profess it to be such, even with the laying down his Life to attest it; and yet that, notwithstanding, it may be a *Lye*, for any thing can be known by the Grounds he goes upon. And, therefore, I deny that, in case Faith depends on some Authority bringing it from Christ (without Certainty of which none can be Certain 'tis *True* at all) that Authority should be *Fallible* in that affair, and perhaps *deceive him* while he trusts it, or relies on it: Or, in case it depends on some *other Means* (*viz.* Scripture's *Letter*, and his own *Interpretation* of it) that Means should not *certainly* bring him to the End, if he makes use of it to the best of his power: I deny it to be *Discretion* to think himself capable to *judge* he has *Absolute Certainty* of the *Intire Books* of Scripture, even to such particular *Words* or *Verses* he builds on, but by our Tradition for *Doctrine*; as likewise of their Translations and Transcriptions all along; and, of the Copies being taken at first from the true Original; whence I deny he can with true reason judge his Faith *True*; since a fault in any of these may make it *False*. I deny that he can with any Discretion *judge* that the ways you prescribe p. 31. for your *Sober Enquirer* to understand the Letter of Scripture right, and so come at true Faith, (*viz.* *comparing Scripture and Expositours upon it, help of spiritual Guides* (who confess they may all be *deceiv'd*, and so may mislead him) and knowing the *sense of the Primitive Church, &c.*) are the means left by God for
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Men to arrive at Faith and Salvation; since to do this, he sees so many volumns must be read over, compar'd, and well-weigh'd, that in all likelihood, a hundred parts of Mankind for one (I may say a thousand) would Dy e're they could make a certain choyce which side to take in *dubious* points; and to add to his discomfort, those Points which of all other, are of highest concern, as are the Trinity, Christ's Godhead, the Real Presence of Christ's Body in the Sacrament, the Efficacy of God's Grace, and such like, are the *most dubious*; as being *most controverted* by the Pretenders to the *Scripture-Rule*. I deny he can with *any Discretion*, when he comes to receive satisfaction of the Absolute Certainty of his Faith, suffer himself to be fobb'd off with telling him there is *Absolute Certainty* of such a *Book* which *contains* it; when common Sense tells him he is as far as ever from having *such a Certainty* of his Faith, unless he has the *same Certainty* he interprets that Book right; and does not err perniciously by misunderstanding the sense of it in those important Articles: Especially, since your selves, tho' it be against your own Interest, are forc't to confess other Great and Learned Bodies had most grievously misunderstood its meaning, who had both the same Letter, and the same Means to look into it that he has, & all that your Grounds afford him. I deny, he can with the least Discretion *judge* it possible that all Christian Fathers could *forget* to day what they held yesterday; or that they should, if they remember'd it, *knowingly resolve* to damn themselves and Posterity, by teaching them a wrong Faith; or, that they *could* conspire to do so if they *would*; and consequently, that he ought not, if he acts discreetly, *judge*, that this Rule of *Tradition* is an absolutely, or infallibly-Certain Conveyer of Christ's Faith down to Our Dayes. Whence, I deny that he can with the least grain
of

of *Discretion* refuse to communicate with those who proceed on such an evidently *Certain Rule*, and are found in Possession of their Faith upon that secure Tenure; and adhere to those others who declare against any *Infallible Rule*; that is, who confess the means they have to know any one *particular Point* of Faith or (which is all one) any Faith at all, is *Fallible*; that their *Guides* may perhaps all *mislead* them, and their *Rule* permit the Followers of it to *Err*. You see now how we allow them the Use of their Reason, and Judgment of *Discretion*, till it brings them to find a *Certain Authority*; and, when they have once found *That*, the same *Judgment of Discretion*, which shew'd them that Authority was *Absolutely Certain*, obliges them to *trust it*, when it tells them what is Christ's Faith; without using their private Judgment any longer, about the *particular Points* themselves, thus ascertain'd to them, but submitting to *It*. In doing which, yet, they do not at all *relinquish* their Reason, but, *follow* and *exercise* it. For, nothing is more Rational than to *submit* to an Authority which my Reason has told me is *Absolutely Certain*, in things which the same Reason assures me can no other wayes be known certainly but by that Authority.

49. Now, let us consider the *Judgment of Discretion*, as understood by you, of which your *sober Enquirer* makes use to find out his Faith. 'Tis onely employ'd about searching out the *sense* of Scripture's *Letter* by *Fallible* means; which he can never hope will preserve him Certainly from Errour, let him do his very best; since he is told, even by your selves, that Great Bodies of very Learned Men, and acute Scripturists do follow the same Rule, and yet erre in the highest Articles of our Belief; nay, he sees himself, by daily experience, how many Sects follow that for their Rule, yet vastly differ.

differ. Whence, instead of *judging discreetly*, he commits the most absurd *Indiscretion* in the world, to hazard his salvation upon his own *Interpretation* of Scripture; when, at the same time, he is told by those very Men who propose to him this Rule, that there is no *Absolute* security (neither by his own Industry, nor his Church's veracity) from *erring* in that Interpretation. And, not only this, but he sees or may see, if he will *soberly enquire*, what Certain Grounds are propos'd by others; and yet suffers his Reason, and the Truth to be run down with the noisy hubbubs against Popery; and, either out of a blameable Weakness, or, perhaps out of an inexcusable obstinacy, rejects those Grounds, or disregards the looking into them. I say again, *Inexcusable*: For, the very Nature of *Faith* tells him, that, 'tis an *Unalterable Assent*, and, that it *cannot possibly be a Ly*; whence, common sense will tell him, 'tis not to be hoped for amongst those who confess that all the Knowledge they have of each particular Point of Faith, (that is of *any* Faith) is *Fallible*; and, onely likely to be had amongst those who *own* and *maintain* their Grounds *cannot deceive them*; so that, such a man, if he ever came to a due Reflexion upon what most concerns him, sins against the Light of Reason, in many regards; and, what you call *Judgment of Discretion* is convinc'd to be the most *Unjudicious Indiscretion* imaginable: And, your *sober Enquirer*, who builds all his hopes of salvation upon *such a Judgment*, proves himself (the weight of the Concern being duly consider'd) to be the most rash and hair-brain'd *Opiniastre*, and the most credulously blind, that ever submitted and prostituted his Rational Faculty (with which God has endow'd him, and will require a strict account of him, how he has us'd it) to a most Groundless and *Improbable Conjecture*. Disregarding all *Authority* out of his presumption on his own *Skill*,

or

or that he is more in *GOD's* Favour than the whole Church; and, I much fear, out of a spiritual Pride, and self-conceit, that he can find out all necessary Faith well enough of *himself*, without being beholding to any Church at all; or, (as you instruct him here p. 21. and declare openly and avowedly you are not ashamed of it) without the Churches Help. Which, is the very First Principle, nay, the Quintessence of all Heresy; Fanaticism in the Egg, perfect Enthusiasm when hatch't, and downright Atheism when fledg'd.

F I N I S.

